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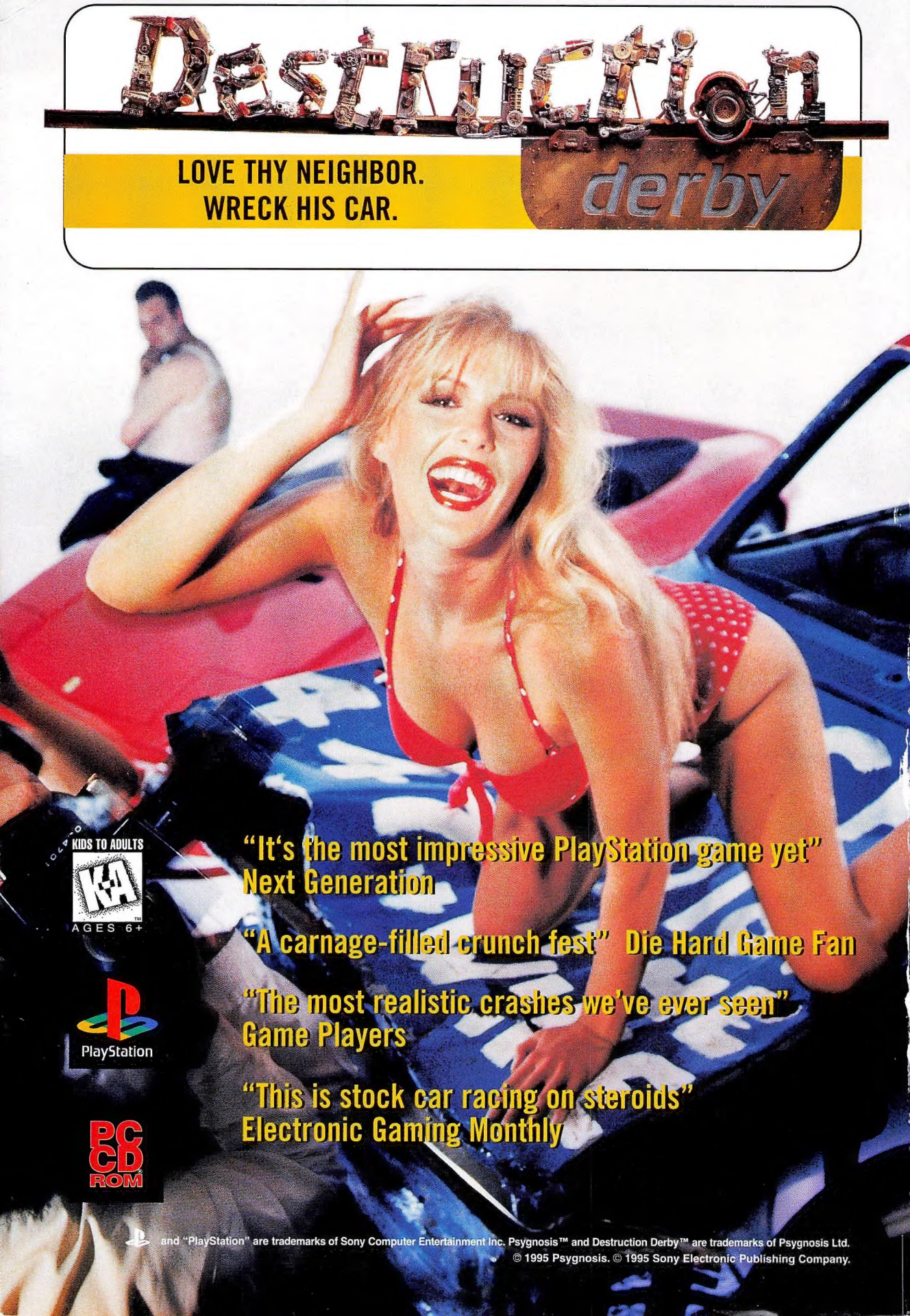
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WIZARD®

Number 53
JANUARY 1996

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exclusives
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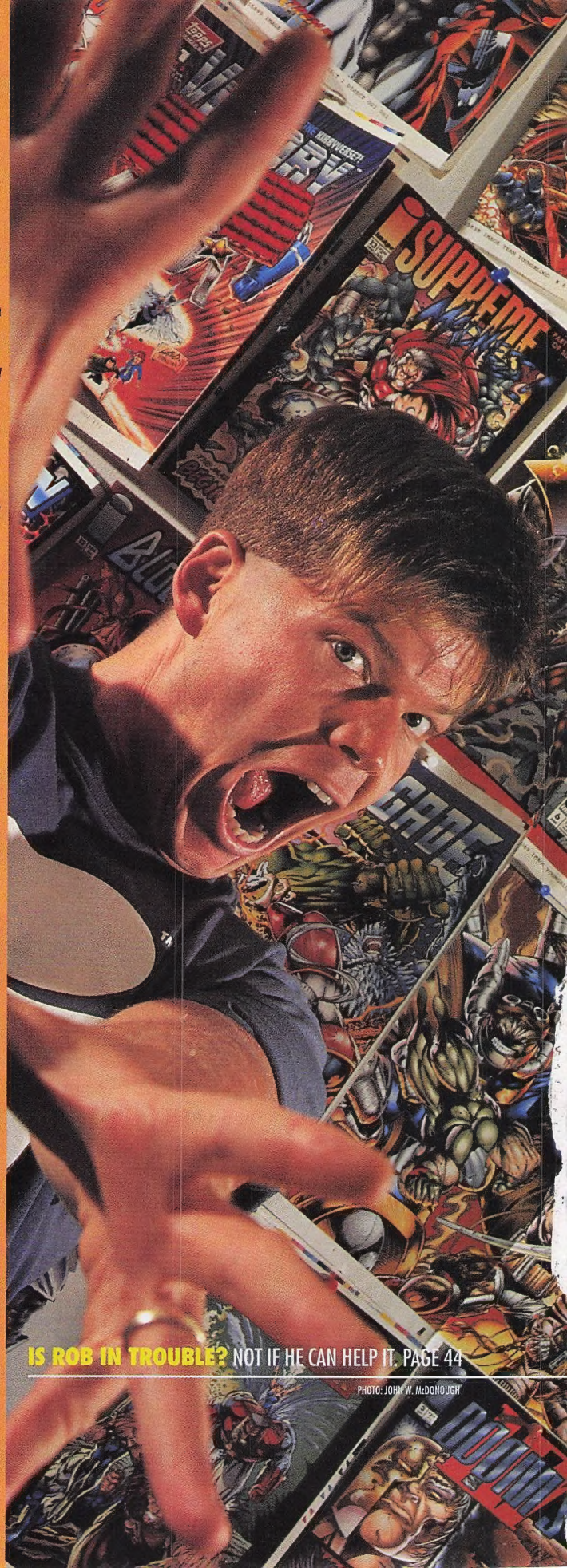

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PHOTO: JOHN W. McDONOUGH

PHOTO: ROBERT BECK

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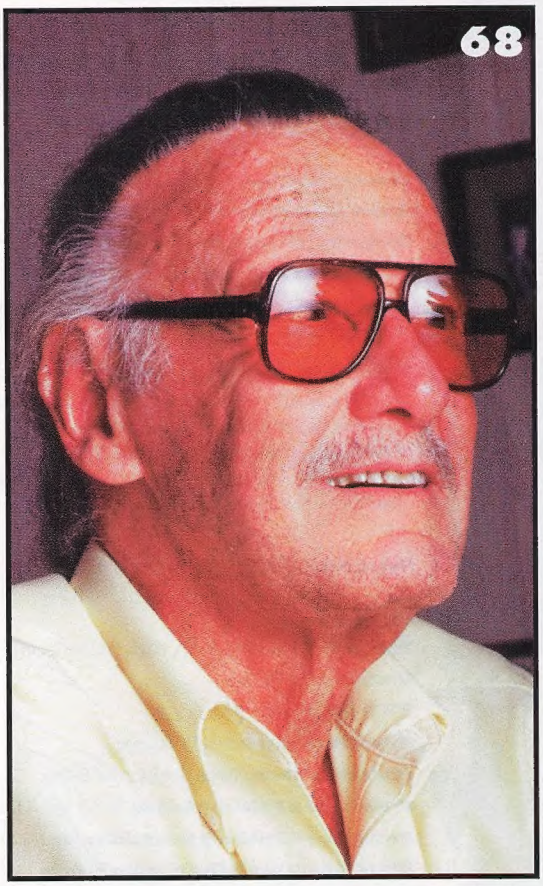
PHOTO: JOHN T. BARR



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"YOU THINK YOU'RE SCARING ME, WEB-SLINGER? WAIT TILL I UNLEASH MY PUNGENT CHEESE ODOR, THEN WE'LL SEE WHO'S SCARED!"

Paul Schiraldi

ANOTHER YEAR OLDER

You know, every year seems to just go by so fast, but I really believe the saying, "Time flies when you're having fun." The last few months have been especially fun for me. We started Wizard World, our online forum, on America Online. We had our 50th Anniversary issue, our 1996 Annual Price Guide and now, our Year-End Spectacular.

Believe it or not, it takes almost the whole year to plan this issue. We keep track of everything that's going on in the comic book world and constantly decide on what direction we're going to take.

This year, we close it out with a John Romita Jr. and Sr. Spidey cover. It's been a big year for the wed-headed wonder. He continued his animated success, had all-new toys, a big McDonald's Happy Meal promotion, and the ever-popular Clone story.

We also have in this issue the 10 biggest events that shook the comic book world in 1995, a really cool "Casting Call" and an awesome opportunity for you to get *The X-Files* #1/2.

This past week was also an exciting one for me. I finalized the marketing plans for 1996. We've come up with lots of really cool new and different ideas that I'm sure you're going to love. I can't say what they are just yet, but I will tell you that next month you'll get two Wizard Board Games—that's right *two*! One side of the board is Mike Allred's Madman Game; flip it over and you can play Evan Dorkin's hysterical Milk and Cheese game. It's a riot!

See ya in '96. Stay cool.

Gareb S. Shamus
Publisher
Wizard Press

P.S. I hope you liked our new Action Figure Price Guide that started in #52, and don't forget to write to me.

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-Chris "Rey de la Quesa" Meyer, SUBCULTURE

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MAGIC WORDS

Getcher Sour Frog Asses Here

We got tons of letters in response to David Nguyen's letter in issue #48 in which Mr. Nguyen stated (and I quote *him* here, not me), " 'Star Trek' sucks sour frog ass!" Many people wrote in to express the opinion that Mr. Nguyen was just a little off base. Most were rather uncertain in their terms. Two things spring immediately to my mind:

1) David Nguyen stole my "sucks sour frog ass" line.

2) Many people thought that it was me who said all the nasty things about "Star Trek." It wasn't. It was Nguyen. For the record, I rather like "Star Trek." I think it's a neato TV show. I just don't want to discuss it with strangers in a Taco Bell line. Is that so bad?

We also got lots of letters about a proposed candidate for president...

Born in the U.S.A.

Dear Wizard,

Attention: Clark Kent, Chairman, Friends to Elect Superman.

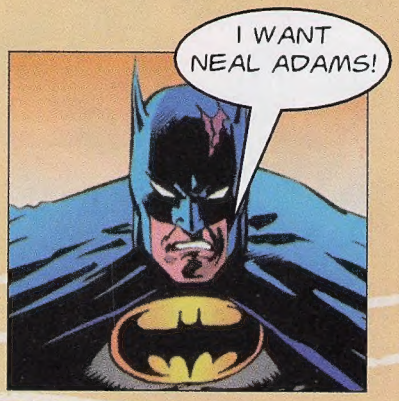
I recently read your nomination of Superman for the office of President of the United States ("Magic Words." *Wizard* #48). Although he would certainly make a super president and save the country millions in federal spending, I must sadly report that Superman cannot hold the highest political office in the land.

The reason he cannot is found in the Constitution. Reference Article II; Section 1; Paragraph 5: "No person except a natural born citizen, or a citizen of the United States at the time of the Adoption of this Constitution shall be eligible to the Office of the President."

Having been born on the planet Krypton, Superman is not a natural born citizen of the United States. So his candidacy must be withdrawn. Perhaps instead, you yourself, Clark Kent, might consider running for the highest office.

Ronald J. Curell,
concerned citizen
Mayville, MI

Nice research, Ronald. But according to the folks at DC Comics, Big Blue is indeed eligible to be chief executive. Y'see, when he was launched from Krypton in his all-terrain, space capsule/matrix chamber, he was still in a gestation period, essentially a fetus. He wasn't truly "born" until the chamber opened, which we all recall happened in Smallville, Kan., U.S.A. Therefore, Superman is a natural born citizen of the United States, and eligible for the presidency. Yeah, it's a bit of a reach, but it's a lot more believable than Bush and Reagan's "I don't remember" responses to the whole Iran/Contra muckamuck.



A Little Backstory...

Dear Wizard,

I really enjoyed the Neal Adams article in *Wizard* #46. I have been a fan and collector of his work for many years. However, there is a part of his history which was not mentioned that directly relates to why Neal Adams is so much in favor of and has fought so hard for creators' rights.

In 1974, Neal Adams went on strike against DC Comics because they would not return his original art pages to him or pay him compensation for keeping them. He also requested art be returned for all artists. Soon thereafter, DC moved their offices and over 1,900 pages of original art turned up missing, many of them Adams'. This may be why there is so little original Adams artwork on the market today.

Personally, I was very glad to find out, through your article, that Neal Adams has ended his strike against DC and is willing to work for them again. After all these years, I can't tell you how much I'd like to see a Batman, Green Arrow or Deadman story done by him. At any rate, I just thought you and all of Adams' fans might appreciate knowing a little more about the origin of his concerns with creators' rights.

David Luhn
Fayetteville, AR

David enclosed an old fanzine called* Inside Comics *that had an editorial where

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Adams explained his point of view and a story detailing the DC move and subsequent art shortfall. It should be pointed out that DC started returning originals to the artists who penciled and inked them shortly thereafter and this practice is now standard throughout the industry.

And hey—I'd love to see a new Neal Adams Batman story myself.

We're still getting lots of mail on cartoon theme songs...

Maestro, Please!

Hey there, Wizard-type people!

We all know the words to Spider-Man's cartoon theme. But what about the Iron Man song? It goes like this (ahem):

Iron Man, Iron Man/Does whatever an iron can/Irons clothes any size/Even pants with big thighs/Look out!/Here comes the Iron Mannnnnn!

Johnathan Hernandez
DocDoom76@aol.com

A little creative license there, but I like it. Hey, wouldn't it be neat if Iron Man was a giant household appliance guy? With starch jets instead of repulsor rays? I think we might have to team him up with the Silver Surfer's board to work out all the wrinkles in this story. [EDITOR'S NOTE: Jim was publicly flogged for that horrendous joke.]

Power to the People!

Dear Wizard,

The buzz over John Byrne's taking over *Wonder Woman* has ignited a burning question in my mind: Where does she rank in the DC power lineup? There was a debate over this a few months back in her title's lettercol with the consensus being that Wonder Woman is the second most powerful hero in the DC Universe, coming in right after Superman. I'm sorry, but I have to disagree. I would also argue the "fact" that Supes is the most powerful.

Exactly what does it mean to be powerful? If you refer to number of powers and their intensity, Wonder Woman hardly ranks second. Neither does Superman. If you mean physical power (strength, speed, etc.), again both WW and Supes fall short. Remember Lar Gand (Valor)? He's a Daxamite, and it has been documented that Daxamites are slightly more powerful than Kryptonians. Considering there are about a dozen heroes in the DC Universe that have enough power to level a city, I decided to do some research and make my own DC power ranking list. Here goes: The 10 Most Powerful (strictly non-magical) DC Heroes:

1) Captain Atom
2) Lar Gand (Valor)
3a) Superman
3b) J'onn J'onzz, the Martian Manhunter
4) Wonder Woman
5) The Ray (current version)
6) The Ray (original)
7) Damage
8) Green Lantern
9) Firestorm
10) Guy Gardner, Warrior

Of course, this list may not be 100 percent accurate. But in my opinion, it's as close as possible. I welcome anyone to make a more accurate list.

Z.Z. Strickland
Opelika, AL

Hoo, boy. Sounds like you've got a lot of extra time on your hands there, Z. But it's an interesting list nonetheless, probably as accurate as any, and guaranteed to generate discussion. It's also kind of funny how Guy Gardner, who was originally presented as a plain-ol'-Joe schoolteacher, has been revamped into a character who makes #10 on your list.

I noticed that you only ranked the DC good guys. So where would heavy hitting baddies like Darkseid or Doomsday fall on your list if they were included? Write back and let us know.

The Listening Station

Dear Wizard,

I wanted to reply to the letter from Adam Frey of Southampton, Pa., that ran in issue #48. Adam, you're absolutely right. Music really does enhance the enjoyment of reading. I always tune in a good radio station while sitting in my favorite recliner and reading. My husband has asked me why I have to turn on music when I'm trying to read. I explained that it's a lot like having a musical score in a movie. You don't go to listen to the music, but when the monster is hiding in the basement, the scary music is what sets you on edge. I'm glad to know that I'm not alone.

As for my preferences, I like to have some good old-fashioned rock 'n' roll playing in the background when I'm reading. I also like to draw. For drawing, nothing gets my creative juices flowing like classical music. If you don't believe me, try listening to *Ride of the Valkeries* or *Flight of the Bumblebee*. My absolute favorite is drawing X-Men and Elfquest characters while Pachabel's *Canon in "D"* is playing.

Connie Watson
Bolivia, NC

We got lots of letters from people who wrote in to tell us their listening preferences when reading comics. The most popular bands? Looks like most people like to throw Nine Inch Nails (they're OK) in the CD player when reading. There was an almost equal amount who listen to (ugh) Hootie and the Blowfish. There was also a surprising amount of support for (double ugh!) Ace of Base. Many people agreed that Rush (Yeah! The three-man army!) was good background music.

THE BUNNY AWARD

be afraid

Paul Schiraldi

Jim takes one of his favorite letters of the month and spotlights it here. There's no logic attached to this nor is there a prize.

Mind Over Metal?

Dear Wizard,

Could Magneto lift Thor's hammer if he magnetized it or whatever he does to metal things when he lifts them?

Luke Gandmont
Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, Canada

Now there's a good question! Magneto has the power to manipulate metal, and Thor's hammer is made of the mystical metal Uru. But only someone who is "worthy" can heft sacred Mjolnir. It's so good a question that I had to appeal to Marvel Comics' very own in-house archivist and general know-it-all, Peter Sanderson. Quoth the sage: "My feeling is that he couldn't lift it." Sanderson points out that in Journey into Mystery #109 (waaaay back in 1964), Magneto faced off against Thor and halted a thrown Mjolnir in mid-air. Thor and Magneto also occupied the same comic space in Avengers #110-#111, but didn't square off. "I think actually holding it in your hand is the key to lifting it, and Magneto couldn't do that. He's not worthy."

Connie was one of the few who mentioned classical music.

I just noticed that when I'm writing "Magic Words," I tend to listen to either the Gear Daddies or Ministry. Think that means anything?

Cheap is Good

Dear Wizard,

It's starting to get difficult to find new comic books on the stands for under two dollars. A good alternative to new comics is digging in back issue bins for good and extremely cheap older comics. I'd like to recommend issues of *The New Teen Titans* from the early '80s. Back then (You remember the early '80s—when Mr. T was popular and Michael Jackson looked sort of almost normal), *Titans* rivaled *X-Men* for the title of hottest team book.

In the past year, I've collected issues #14-#46 and *Annuals* #1-#3. All of them are in good condition and were either free when I bought a new comic, or averaged about 50 cents each.

At those prices, issues of *Titans* are a bargain. The team of Marv Wolfman as writer and George Pérez as penciler was the best of the '80s. The Pérez and (inker) Romeo Tanghal art was incredible. They could tell a story very well, and they put an amazing amount of detail in their art, something that few artists today bother to do. The writing by Marv Wolfman was second only to Chris Claremont's.

The New Teen Titans developed characters like Dick Grayson, Wally West and Donna Troy from mere kid sidekicks into the independent adult heroes they are today. Other Titans like Cyborg, Starfire and Raven may not be hot today, but back then they were some of the most original and interesting characters in comics.

I single out issues #38, #39, and the "Judas Contract" storyline that ran through #42-#44 and *Annual* #3 as the best in the series. And check out the really cool first three pages from issue #39. It was obviously the inspiration for the opening pages of *X-Force* #1.

Before *Gen*[13] and *New Warriors*, the series that set the standard for team books and teen books was *The New Teen Titans*.

Lawrence Futol
San Francisco, CA

Good point. One way to combat the ever-escalating price of new comics is to track down some cheap back issues. If you haven't tried it yet, give it a shot. In many cases, you may find that you get better material for less money. And that's a bargain for anyone.

The New Teen Titans was quite the critically acclaimed book in the early '80s, although it never really turned my crank. If you're looking for similar good (and cheap!) reading from that early '80s era, try American Flagg! and Jon Sable, Freelance from First Comics, or Moon Knight (first series), Ka-Zar (third series) and Micronauts (first series) from Marvel. At a few quarters a pop, they're definitely worth a read.

Pointy-Eared Freaks

Dear Wizard,

For quite some time now I've been enjoying your magazine. I have become an avid reader of many titles that this great industry has to offer. Having said that, I have one complaint: You rarely mention one of the greatest comics in creation... *Elfquest*.

That's right. You heard me. *Elfquest*. I know I'm not the only one. I've helped many of my friends discover comics, and usually start them out on *Elfquest*. That's how I got started at age seven when I picked up a copy of *Elfquest* #17 and was mesmerized. Eight years later I have collected all eight graphic novels, and recently started collecting such spin-offs as *Wavedancers* and *Hidden Years*. Although they pale in comparison to the original, they help to feed my elf hunger.

A few months ago, you mentioned there was going to be an Elfquest movie. What has happened since then? When is it coming out? And why is it so hard to find the new *Elfquest* titles? I really feel more attention could be drawn to these (as you called them in issue #49) "li'l pointy-eared freaks" and their fabulous creators.

Lynne Bloom
East Brunswick, NJ

I got hooked on Elfquest at age 14 when (ironically enough) issue #14 came out. Back then, WaRP Graphics had said an Elfquest movie would be out in late 1986, when I'd be a college freshman.

Well, I just made the final payment on my student loans yesterday, and guess what? Still no Elfquest movie. Movie plans have been delayed and delayed again by a number of factors. As of our most recent word, Pressman Films has the movie rights and an animated Elfquest movie is in pre-production. See last issue's "Trailer Park" column for full info.

If you're having trouble finding Elfquest titles, have your friendly neighborhood comic retailer order them for you. You might have to put a small deposit down on special orders, but any shopkeeper worth his dreamberries will be happy to do this for you. If he doesn't, leave him to the mercy of the trolls.

A Bout of Vertigo

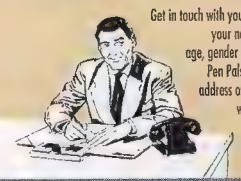
Dear Wizard,

Thank you for finally giving Vertigo some well deserved attention in *Wizard* #49. There are only two imprints today that guarantee good quality comics every month and Vertigo is one of those two (Legend being the other). For some reason though, *Wizard* has ignored Vertigo in the past, only occasionally doing stories about the big stars like Neil Gaiman and Matt Wagner. But what about stories on Peter Milligan, Jamie Delano or Grant Morrison? Lets see an article on *Shade* or *Hellblazer* for a change.

Jonathan Schultz
Frederick, MD

All right already. How about a Preacher feature coming soon? Will that do ya? At the least, it'll give you a nice fix of Garth Ennis and Steve Dillon, the current Preacher (and former Hellblazer) creative team. Personally, I'd also like to say, "Fight, fight, fight! I'm with ya!" I rather dig the entire Vertigo line myself. Books of Magic and Sandman Mystery Theatre are consistently two of my favorite titles each month. Come to think of it, The Invisibles and Preacher are usually right up there too.

Hey! It's Pen Pals



Get in touch with your fellow comic fans! Send your name, address, age, gender and three favorite titles to Pen Pals, c/o the Magic Words address on page 14. **NOTE:** Please write your **age** clearly on the envelope. Hey, make a friend!

PEN PALS

Andrew Lyons
Age: 25 Sex: Male
1036 Omar Drive
Crownsville, MD 21032
Likes: *Sandman, Justice League Task Force, Batman: LOTDK*

Weasel
Age: 13 Sex: Male
9500 Birchwood Pike
Harrison, TN 37341
Likes: *Lady Death, Evil Ernie, Spawn*

Jason Thomason
Age: 19 Sex: Male
36 S. Edwards St.
Franklin, IN 46131
Likes: *Spawn, WildC.A.T.s, Youngblood*

Stephanie Yuhas
Age: 13 Sex: Female
2 Arlington Place
Piscataway, NJ 08854
Likes: X-Men, all Anne Rice titles, *Gambit*

Fabian Cruz
Age: 12 Sex: Male
1310 Pines Lane
West Palm Beach, FL 33415
Likes: *Akira, Angela, Avengelyne*

Louis Butterfield
Age: 13 Sex: Male
RR 3, Box 80
Cambridge, NE 69022
Likes: X-Men, *Pitt, The Maxx*

Chris Clark
Age: 22 Sex: Male
11 Cummings Rd. #3
Brookline, MA 02146
Likes: Bongo titles, *Ren & Stimpy, Catwoman*

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- GAMEPRO MAGAZINE

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A Kinder, Gentler Wizard?

Dear Wizard,

I have noticed in recent issues that you guys have unfortunately toned down the sardonic wit and biting criticism that has been your hallmark. Which brings me to a question: Do you (or did you) get into trouble with comic companies for belittling their products in your pages?

Knowing a bit about the publishing world, I know that your magazine is reliant on the revenue brought in by the advertising space you sell. And if a big company like Marvel threatened to pull its ads, you guys would probably be in a state of crisis.

That said, how did Marvel react when you came down so hard on the Spider-Man Clone storyline? You went beyond standard criticism, and jumped straight into jokes, mockery, scornful disdain and other negative devices at the storyline's expense. You also maintained this "theme" of story-bashing over the course of several issues. No doubt your attitude influenced your vast readership (I know it influenced me), and put the Clone story in a negative light. No doubt Marvel realized that this ongoing harsh criticism turned off a lot of people (like me) who otherwise might have spent money on the Spider-Man Clone books.

My question isn't just limited to Marvel. You also often aimed cynicism and wry scorn at DC, Image, Valiant and others. So I want to know how the various companies react to this. And is the noticeable change in your attitude an effort to appease them?

Don't get me wrong. I actually liked the old attitude. In this age of runaway corporate mentality in comics, I saw your attitude as one which reflected that of many contemporary comic fans (like me). I think that's one reason your magazine is popular. I want the old, biting *Wizard* back! But if what I suspect is true (and please tell me it's not), you yourself have (understandably) become victim to corporate necessity.

Gotta get those ad revenues!

Aaron Woolfolk
New York, NY

Huh? For all the crap we take in any given month, it sure seems like we piss off enough people. But you raise a very good point.

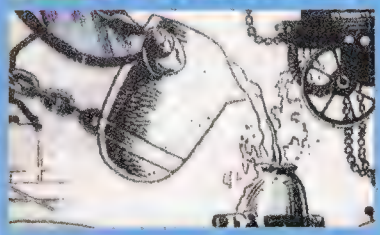
The business of business is to make money. And Wizard Press is a business. It makes its money largely off revenue derived from Wizard: The Guide to Comics, both by selling copies of the magazine and by selling ad space. The reason that it can sell copies of Wizard and the reason that it can sell ad space in Wizard is that Wizard is a fairly popular magazine.

What makes it popular? I think a significant portion of its popularity comes from its "biting" attitude. That's what the real "corporate necessity" is on this magazine.

I really don't think Wizard's attitude has changed significantly in any way that I can perceive. Our "nasty-ometer" may vary slightly from month to month, but I think overall it remains pretty constant. If anything, it may have gotten nastier. Speaking strictly personally, I think there were a couple instances in the past few months when we stepped over a line that I wasn't comfortable with. I'll leave it to you to figure out what those instances were.

How did the folks at Marvel react to our criticism of the Spider-Clone? Angrily, as is their right—just as it is our right as an outside observer to react with harsh criticism to something we disagree with. Marvel has every right to abuse us for the

We Looked It Up



Ad•am•ant•i•um (adam ant ee uhm) *Marvel Universe.* 1 An almost indestructible man-made steel alloy invented by Dr. Myron MacLain 2 Was formerly bonded to Wolverine's skeleton to make him immeasurably more powerful 3 Was fused with Wakandan Vibranium and an unknown factor to form an even tougher alloy that was immediately shaped into the disc that is now Captain America's shield 4 The midget version of the popular '80s pop icon Adam Ant, known for such songs as "Goody Two Shoes" and "Strip"

PEN PALS

Mary Jane Sales
Age: 16 Sex: Female
674-676 Quezon Ave. San Fernando, La Union, Philippines 2500
Likes: Jim Lee's titles, Marc Silvestri's titles, and lots more

Karl André Skare
Age: 17 Sex: Male
St. Hanshaugen 4
5033 Fyllingsdalen, Norway
Likes: Superman, Valiant titles, *Spawn*

Tina Pham
Age: 16 Sex: Female
45-505 Apapane Street
Kaneohe, HI 96744
Likes: X-titles, *Cable*, *WildC.A.T.s*

Evelyn Herman
Age: 13 Sex: Female
7032 Canterbury La.
Alexandria, VA 22307
Likes: *Gambit*, *Rogue*, all X-titles

Harry Thompson Jr.
Age: 16 Sex: Male
87 Cottage St.
Woonsocket, RI 02895
Likes: Spawn, all X-titles, most Image titles

abuse that we gave it. If we dish it out, we should be prepared to stand and take it. I think we are.

We've been "into trouble" before. We've had publishers really pissed at us and we've had the magazine bounced out of some stores. In retrospect, some things we've done in the past we'd do differently if we had the chance. Some we'd never change. We'll probably fall "into trouble" sometime again. It's inevitable in the publishing business. Why? Because the bottom line is that any magazine has as its primary duty the duty to be objective and not to bow to pressure. I think we've done a good job of that in the past and I have every confidence that we will continue to in the future.

Godzilla photo courtesy of Everett Collection

Property Damage

Dear Wizard,

If Godzilla faced off against Fin Fang Foom, who would win? How much damage would be done?

Timothy Chin
Metairie, LA

Your answers: Fin Fang Foom and one hell of a lot. I just hope that the battle takes place in Tokyo, where all monster battles should. For more of this kind of good garbage, check out next month's Wizard for Round Two of "When Titans Tussle," more crossover battles you'll probably never see.

Mr. Webster, a Ruling Please:

Dear Wizard,

How do you pronounce Rob Liefeld's name?

SDivers241@aol.com

It's pronounced "Ly-feld," not "Lee-feld" or "Ly-field."

This Guy is Golden

Dear Wizard,

Can you tell me what happened to artist Michael Golden? In my opinion, he was one of the best comic artists ever, but I haven't seen anything from him in quite a while. What's he doing?

Kevin Smith
Worthington, MN

Golden, perhaps most famous for his run on the aforementioned Micronauts, *has been pretty quiet lately. He recently did a series of covers for Marvel's Punisher titles and is currently illustrating the covers of Topps Comics' Jurassic Park comics. He will be penciling and inking Topps' upcoming* Spartan X, *a Jackie Chan series, in the spring of '96.*

Out of the Closet and Out of Fans' Hearts

Dear Wizard,

In issue #49, your letters column touched on "the real absurdity of racial and ethnic hatred that exists in our own society."

The day before I read *Wizard* #49, I read *Gen*[13] #3. Its letters column actually had people threatening to stop buying *Gen*[13] if they didn't "change Rainmaker back" to a heterosexual character. For those who don't read this comic, I refer to a young lady recently revealed to be a lesbian.

Can you believe this?! I am an up-the-ass-conservative, and while I don't condone it, I recognize that homosexuality exists. I think people should open their eyes to things happening in this world instead of closing them and hoping that they're gone when they open them again.

I found the act of creating a lesbian main character to be very brave on WildStorm Productions' part. It's an actual reflection on young people's confusions, bravado, pains and problems.

But I can't stop wondering: What would these angry letter writers do if they found out their best friend was gay? Obviously (and unfortunately) they'd probably "stop buying them" too.

Victor Bosch,
San Juan, Puerto Rico

Let me first point out that I usually edit the heck out of an average "Magic Words" letter. Some writers just don't have a strong grasp of syntax or spelling. But Victor's "up-the-ass-conservative" description of himself is a direct quote. It falls to you to determine what that means.

Not to make light of this letter, Victor raises an important point. Rainmaker was an extremely popular character when we assumed she was "straight." She's still popular—although less so—now that we know she's a lesbian. Is this hypocritical on the part of fans who turned their back on a fictional character? Or is it an appropriate response, seeing as how they didn't know the full story before? Might the same arguments apply to real life situations? Be prepared. You might have to ask yourself this same question sooner or later.

Don't Panic!

Dear Wizard,

Don't Panic, the companion book to the *Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy* series, is written by a Neil Gaiman. Is this the *Sandman* writer? Or is it another Neil Gaiman?

Brad Winter
Great Bend, KS

Same guy. Goes to show you that some of them funny-book-writin' chaps know a thing or two about straight prose too.

Should You Choose to Accept it...

Dear Magic Words,

I have a mission for you. Go to a comic shop. Pick up *Scud: The Disposable Assassin* #1 through #8. Read them. Laugh your ass off. And put them in the price guide, hot dammit!

Jeremy Lerner
Herndon, VA

Mission accomplished. Scud *is good for some serious belly laughs and it's now in the price guide, hot dammit!*

Real World Comics

Dear Wizard,

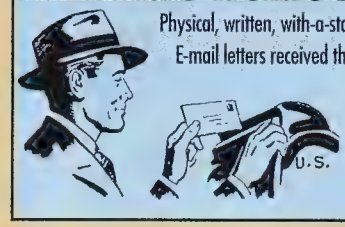
Did *Ruins #1* make anyone else out there feel a little disturbed? I felt kind of dirty after reading it, mainly because it felt more "real" than the current Marvel Universe.

I can't say a comic book has had this kind of impact on me ever, and I'm still wondering if this is a good thing.

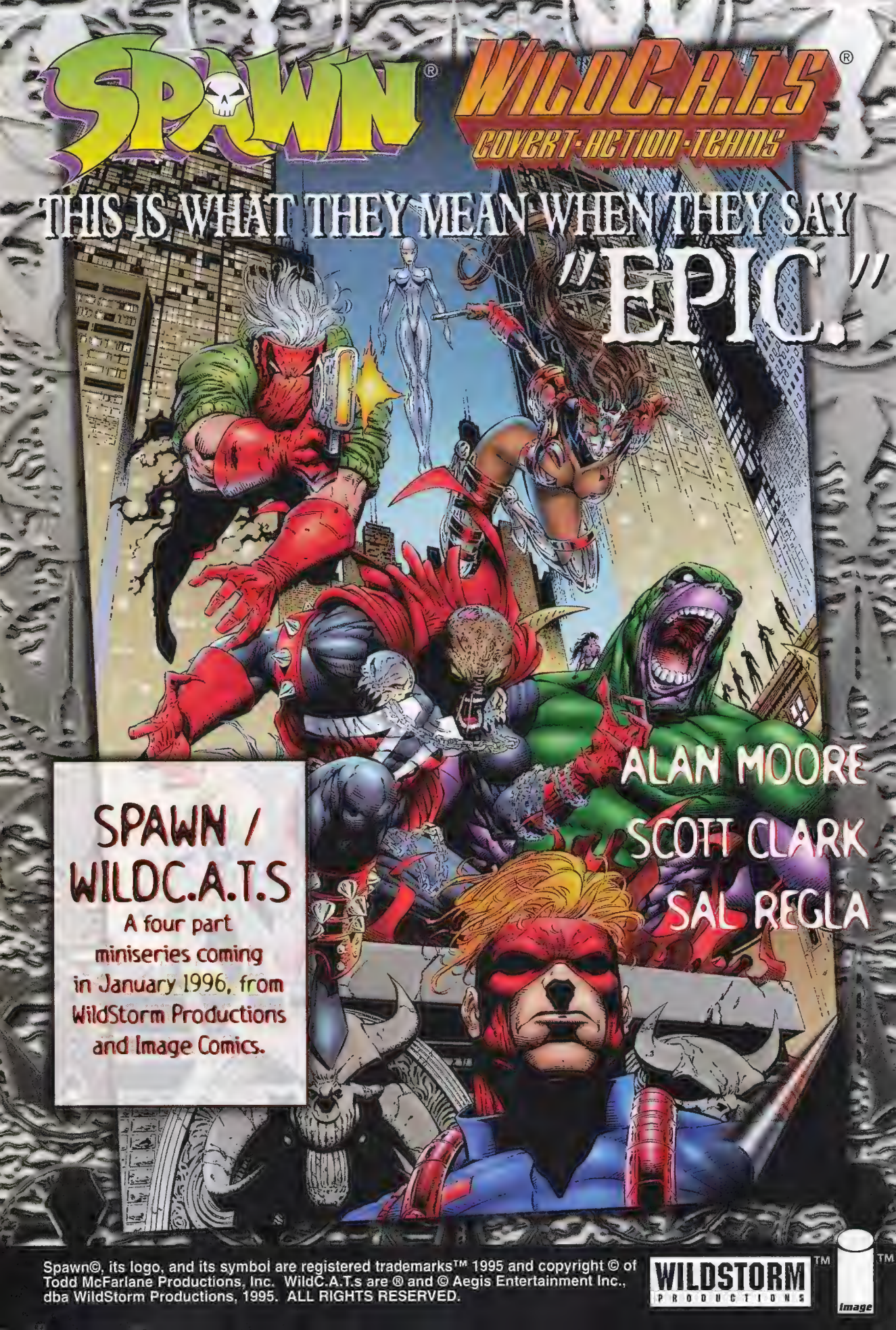
John D. Knox
San Francisco, CA

I dug Ruins! *The thing I liked about this*

THE MAGIC WORDS INDEX



Physical, written, with-a-stamp letters received this month: **2,447**
E-mail letters received this month: **586**
Letters this month form prison: **8**
Letters this month written on free hotel stationery: **6**
Chain letters this month (they're illegal, y'know): **12**
Letters this month containing the word "scatological": **1**



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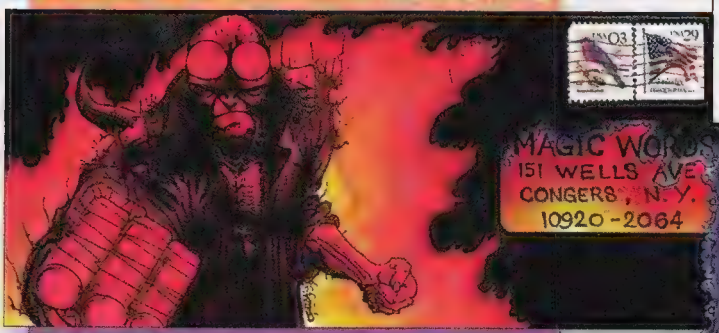
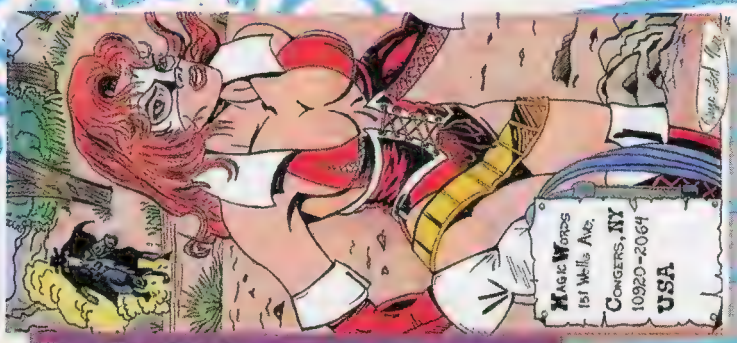


Richard Orlina Astoria, NY

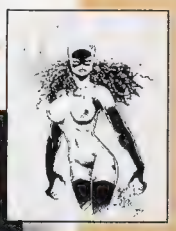
Bill VanDuzee Orange Park, FL

Charles Rowsell London, England



Hugo Leal Neri Aguascalientes, Ags., Mexico

little Alterniverse (or "What If...") series was that it seemed like a cool portrayal of what would happen in the real world. If Bruce Banner is exposed to an atomic blast, is he gonna get green and strong or is he gonna get cancer? Cancer may be an uglier alternative, but it is a more realistic one. Kudos to writer Warren Ellis on a job well done.



"A" is for Apple, "J" is for Jerk

Dear Wizard People,

At a recent comic convention in my hometown of San Diego, I picked up a free box of Apple Jacks that was being given away at the show. Later, I got it signed by several comic big shots including Tim Sale, Fabian Nicieza, Joe Quesada, Mark Waid and Chris Claremont. How much is this little box of breakfast cereal worth?

Tim Bennett
San Diego, CA

This guy's not kidding. I saw him and his box.

Your box is worth nothing monetarily, but is still an excellent source of riboflavin. Now grab some milk, sit down, shut up and start eating.

Another Fine Product From the Dow Company

Dear Wizzy,

What the hell happened to the Scrubbing Bubbles? They used to be no-nonsense, butt-kicking cleaning machines! Now they're line dancing and singing! What happened?

Ryan White
Fort Wayne, IN

I don't know. They still work just fine in my bathroom. But your alarm is noted—and justified. Line dancing is the first step down the slippery slope to Hell.

That's it for this expanded year-end edition. I need some sleep. I remain...

—Jim McLauchlin

Jim McLauchlin thinks that life's greatest pleasure just might be listening to Keith Jackson call a college football game. OK, pizza's up there too. And beer. And comely lasses.

Send letters to:
Magic Words
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or e-mail us at WizardTGTC@AOL.Com

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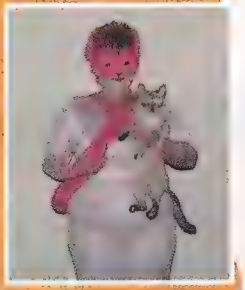
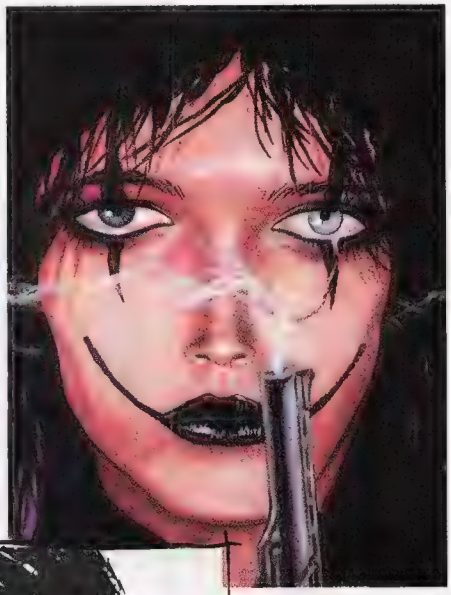


ASPCA cracks down on masked cat-juggler. "Hey, relax. They're already dead," claimed performer moments before being sprayed by Sunshine the exploding cat.

Stan Lee shocked after reading the Spider-Clone saga. "I think I swallowed my gum," exclaimed beloved godfather of comics.

Alan Moore scarred by freak cheese accident. "Aye. Shiver me timbers, matey, it was an evil breed of devil-cheese!" sputtered scabby comics scribe.

"Several artists and writers expressed an interest in working within the **Crow** mythos," explained **James O'Barr**, creator of the popular graphic novel which served as the basis for a star-crossed movie. "I figured that the concept of allowing other creators to tell their stories has been done successfully with Matt Wagner's Grendel and would work with my character as well."



The result is an ongoing set of mini-series, jointly published by Kitchen Sink Press Inc. and Top Dollar Comics, a division of the Edward R. Pressman Film Corp., which made the film version of *The Crow* and is currently filming its sequel, *The Crow: City of Angels*.

The first new story is a three-parter, ***The Crow: Dead Time***, beginning in January. It opens a few years after the end of the Civil War and depicts the brutal slaughter of a Kansas farmer and his family by a vicious band of renegades. As the horror unfolds, the story cuts back and forth to the present, where the killers have been reincarnated as a biker gang. These modern marauders will pay the price for their terrible deeds—past and present—because, just before dying, the fatally wounded farmer managed to reach an old Indian burial ground, where a mystic crow waited to offer him a chance for vengeance.

Writer John Wagner (*Judge Dredd*) and artist Alex Maleev (*Death Rattle*) are the storytellers. O'Barr, who serves as de facto editor of the book ("My only rule is that the Crow has to bring a soul back to avenge a wrong and that there must be a cat somewhere in each story."), is doing painted covers. The 32-page black-and-white title will appear monthly and carry a "mature readers" advisory.

O'Barr also revealed, "I am working with Kyle Hotz on a new 96-page Crow story that will be published as either a graphic novel or a three-part mini-series." He is not involved with the movie sequel, however, explaining that "Brandon [Lee, the young actor who died in the filming of *The Crow*] was such a good friend of mine, and I see the character as so much a vehicle for him, that I just wouldn't feel comfortable about that at this time."

Publisher Denis Kitchen said, "We're very happy to be publishing new Crow stories from James and other fine creators. There is a large fan base that wants to read new comic book stories about this character and James has made that a reality." ■ *Jack Curtin*

ahead

MEGATON MAN FOR PRESIDENT!

TOPPS GOES WESTERN AGAIN!

PUNISHER'S NEW DUDS!

AND COMPANY UPDATES!

Bizarre Hero Declares Candidacy

Following in the tradition of Pogo and Alfred E. Neuman, **Don Simpson**'s **Megaton Man** has announced his run for president. The goggled hero, one of the stars of Simpson's *Bizarre Heroes*, will launch his campaign with the February release of *Megaton Man #1*, a third printing of his 1984 introduction.

Simpson said he decided to throw MM's goggles into the ring because there's no solid candidate for the White House right now. "I'm kind of a news junkie—I watch a lot of PBS and C-SPAN—and there aren't a lot of exciting candidates right now. There's definitely an opening for a comic book character to run," he said.

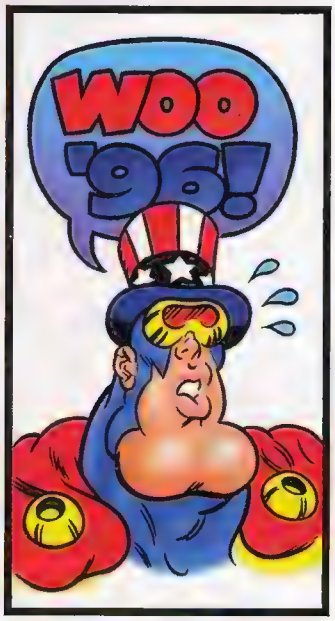
He also admitted that it is something of a publicity ploy. "I've been doing *Bizarre Heroes* for about two years and, despite my best efforts, Megaton Man remains my most popular character. So I figured I'd spotlight him," he explained. "There's no sense in being subtle about it. What kind of gimmick would get people talking? I'm thinking more and more like a publisher than a cartoonist these days."

Asked about Megaton Man's platform and stance on the important issues of the day, Simpson noted that the hero hasn't exactly had a chance to work it all out yet. "MM's kind of a reluctant candidate. He's always being drafted to do things by the other heroes—the dirty work. He goes into battle expecting them to back him up, and they always chicken out," he said.

"That's the political situation as well—he'll be drafted by the party and have nobody follow him."

Most of the campaign will be fought in the pages of a series of pairings, as Megaton Man meets his rivals. "You can't just keep putting out comics called *Megaton Man #1*, so my next idea was to do a series of team-ups—Megaton Man vs. somebody—and still keep the number one on the cover," Simpson said. "They aren't really one-shots; we like to call them 'primary debates.' We'll set him up with some easy ones—the first is Forbidden Frankenstein, who is not much of a debater." The first of the "debates" is tentatively set for Spring '96.

The closest thing Megaton Man will have to a "position paper" is the forthcoming 48-page collection of pin-ups and unpublished art called *Megaton Man's Reinforced Concrete Bomb Shelter #1*. That's also set for a mid-'96 release date. ■ *Patrick Daniel O'Neill*



Maggie the Cat Lands on Her Feet

It seems like the perfect time for **Mike Grell** to let the Cat out of the bag.

Grell is ending his ***Shaman's Tears*** series with #0 in November by bringing back Maggie the Cat—the international jewel thief introduced way back in *Jon Sable Freelance* #11 (April 1984) and who reappeared in *Shaman's Tears* #11—in a new monthly series from Creative Fire Studio for **Image Comics** beginning in January.

"It was really time to do the Maggie series," said editor **Mike Gold**, who had co-plotted a *Maggie the Cat* series back in the 1980s before he and Grell started a successful stint on DC Comics' *Green Arrow*. "I doubt the series would be as successful in 1985 as it could be in 1995. Back then you couldn't *give away* a comic with a female as the lead character."

"In many ways, Maggie was the first of the so-called Bad Girl heroines," Grell said. "Tough, independent and a self-made woman, Maggie was the first major heroine to provide the one element missing from the 'Good Girl' comics of the 1940s and 1950s—that element being strong plot and story.

"We've all missed Maggie. With all the interest in female heroes, her time has finally come."

Grell will write and draw *Maggie the Cat*, with an art assist from *Magic: The Gathering* card artist Brian Snoddy. Rob Prior will color, and long-time Creative Fire collaborator Steve Haynie will letter.

To add new spice, the first issue, shipping in January, will introduce Ryan James, an actor and often unwilling employee of the British government who is coerced into keeping tabs on Maggie while she's on an anti-terrorist mission. This will create quite a bit of jealousy from Jon Sable.

Aside from *Maggie*, Grell has layouts and a story for a *Shaman's Tears* project due out next summer, which will either be a mini-series or a graphic novel. ■ *Rob Allstetter*

The Bronx Becomes a Ghost Town

Dan Ketch and his hotheaded alter ego will see a change of scenery as new ***Ghost Rider*** writer **Ivan Velez Jr.** (*Blood Syndicate*) moves him from the Cypress Hills section of Brooklyn to the meaner streets of the Bronx. This is a setting with which Velez is more familiar. "In the Bronx, there are more people of color and different belief systems, and I'd like to see how Ghost Rider would affect their belief systems," Ivan observed. "The church is a very strong force here, and seeing a guy with a flaming skull head driving around would be pretty interesting to a wino, a churchgoer, a little kid in Catholic school or a priest. This would probably upset a few people."

This move also gets Dan out from under his mother's influence towards more independence. "I figure he's just turned 21. He needs to get a job and get his life together, so he's going to school here."

Early issues of Velez's run will deal with a drug lord named Snowblind who has plans for the Bronx. Ghost Rider interferes with those plans, so Snowblind tries to get rid of him by stirring up the community against him. In addition, Ghost Rider starts remembering things about his mysterious past. According to Velez, these triggered memories will lead into a big storyline about Ghost Rider's real past—who he really is and why he has such strong desires for vengeance. ■ *Paul J. Grant*

Westward Ho with Topps

Having firmly established its version of the **Lone Ranger and Tonto** in a successful mini-series in 1994, **Topps** will return to the adventures of the masked man and his faithful Indian companion in the spring of '96. Writer **Joe Lansdale** will continue to weave the tales, but artist **Tim Truman** won't be coming back, as his schedule and Topps' just couldn't mesh. Instead, Ted Naifeh (Dark Horse's *The Machine*) will be penciling the series.

Lansdale plans a unique setting for this next Ranger tale: San Francisco's Chinatown. "We already established in the first series that the Lone Ranger and Tonto had studied martial arts under a great master," he reminded readers. "Now we find out who that master is." Rumors are that the duo's sensei is a well known "Kung Fu" expert on the run from Chinese authorities—but whether he will be explicitly named hinges on permission from the owners of the character. Suffice it to say that together the three could certainly raise some cane.

Later in the year, possibly timed to coincide with the release of a new cinematic version starring Antonio Banderas, Topps will bring the hero of Spanish Los Angeles back into print. Still written by **Don McGregor** and drawn by **Mike Mayhew**, this new **Zorro** adventure—a five-part mini-series—will be entitled *Matanzas*, a reference to the slaughter season on the California ranchos.

"This is the story that should really make Machete stand out as the major league character he is," McGregor said of the villain he created for the original Topps *Zorro* series.

But first McGregor will be re-introducing readers to one of the great successes of the initial *Zorro* series, the swashbuckling **Lady Rawhide**. A second solo adventure for the lady in leather will follow within two months of the completion of her current mini-series. McGregor was closed-mouthed about the nature of the new five-issue tale, although he said the story will introduce an Indian woman named Sky Wolf...who will reappear in another series as a love interest for a certain Native American sidekick.

Somewhere in between the second *Lady Rawhide* series and the second *Zorro* series, McGregor will get his chance at scripting the other masked man in a story that combines Zorro and the Lone Ranger. Entitled *Killing Time*, the series will team up the two characters, despite a 60-year difference in their time frames.

"How can I explain this without giving too much away?" McGregor pondered. "Part of the key is in the title, which has so many meanings if you look at it. The series will be done as three one-shots: a Lone Ranger one-shot, a Zorro one-shot, and then a Zorro/Ranger one-shot."

And, not to keep anyone hanging, it's here that Sky Wolf returns, to bring some romance into Tonto's life.

Art for the Western team-up comes from **Claude St. Aubin**, who is also working with McGregor on Topps' adaptation of the forthcoming James Bond flick, *Goldeneye*. ■ *Patrick Daniel O'Neill*

Motown Launches in December

Four happenin' new ideas will reign supreme in December as **Motown Animation and Filmworks** premieres its **Machineworks** line of comics through the auspices of **Image Comics**.

The line, originally announced to be distributed by Marvel, consists of three superhero concepts and an introductory anthology showcase title.

Company president **Michael Davis** said the shift in alliances was, in part, a result of Marvel's decision to go in-house with its distribution. "We originally met with the Image guys and the Motown executives were taken aback by their wackiness," he said. "The execs wanted to explore other options, so we talked to Marvel, who had come to us. [Marvel Comics president] Terry Stewart and I had a solid relationship, but when Terry's position got shifted around, and when Marvel began doing its own distribution, we had to rethink the deal. If you're beginning a brand new in-house distribution setup, whose books are going to get the promotional push? So we went back to Image and cemented the deal with them."

First out of the chute for Machineworks will be *The Crush*—a criminal psychiatrist who moonlights as a violent avenger. "Think of it as the Equalizer with an attitude," said Davis. The Crush's adventures are written by **Mike Baron** (*Nexus*) with art from Steve Harris and Reggie Jones.

Next up is *Man Against Time*, telling the tale of Law, a time-traveler who attempts to set right the time-stream as he sees it. He's opposed by fugitives from the "errant" time lines he destroys. His stories are told by writer Brett Lewis and artist Gino DiCicco.

Casual Heroes turns to the hero as celebrity, as the Redeemers are led by Saturn Red, who seems to have his eye more on the bucks and the broads than on protecting the city of New Jericho. Kevin McCarthy handles the story and art, with John Stangeland inking.

Finally, there's *Machineworks Presents*, a showcase title for new ideas.

The first issue will present Trouble Man, a concept Davis described as "a superhero, science-fiction roller coaster." Davis scripts that one, with art from Charles Drost.

But why is a music and film company suddenly interested in comics?

"Motown Animation is interested in exploring intellectual properties, new ideas that can be used in the mass media," Davis replied. "I think comics are a great place to develop those properties." ■ *Patrick Daniel O'Neill*

HELLBOY: MIGNOLA GETS HIS IRISH UP

As the first step in **Mike Mignola** and **Hellboy**'s journeys through the world's folklore, ***The Corpse and the Iron Shoes*** presents us with a pair of interwoven tales from Irish myths and legends.

The regular format one-shot loosely adapts two true Irish folk tales, "The Changeling" and "The Corpse on His Back," which show how Hellboy is hired to retrieve a baby stolen by fairies.

"It's one night that Hellboy spends with 'little people' and monster characters, all the while with a corpse on his back that he's sworn to help put to final rest," Mignola explained. "Hellboy has to find a place that the little people will accept as a proper burial site. So he goes from place to place and encounters resistance at every turn."

"The Iron Shoes" is simply a term Mignola felt summed up the feel of the Irish legends, which he manifests in a character who provides the resistance Hellboy encounters in trying to bury the corpse. Mignola said this will be a hallmark in his career.

"This is the Hellboy story that I'm going to have to outdo," Mignola predicted. "Hellboy has spent time in every country in the world, so I want to do stories in which he has to experience each country's legends and lore.

"Besides, those legends are already *far* weirder than anything I could make up myself."

Mignola plans to continue sending Hellboy on an international trek, with projects in the works pitting Hellboy against all the world's supernatural forces, including *Wake the Devil* in April, pitting Hellboy against a Romanian vampire.

"I've always intended for Hellboy to be a series of mini-series," Mignola said. "I'm trying like hell to remedy the irregular schedule we've been on. I want to get at least one mini-series and something else out every year.

"Hellboy is becoming sort of like 'Mike Mignola's History of the World, the Universe and the Origin of Man.' Everything I do from now on should conform to this world, to make them part of the mytho-historical information I'm putting forth."

The Corpse and the Iron Shoes, written and illustrated by Mignola with colors by Matt Hollingsworth, ships in January from Dark Horse for $2.95. ■ *Gary St. Lawrence*

Wendy Pini's Quest Continues

After taking a hiatus from comics over a year ago to work on the ***Elfquest*** animated movie, **Wendy Pini** is returning to draw the final three issues of *Elfquest: Shards*, issues #14-#16.

"My official title on the *Elfquest* movie is executive producer," said Pini, explaining her long absence from comics, "which means that I've done just about everything under the sun. We've got a completed storyboard drawn entirely by me, and a completed script. I love working in California on the movie—most people hate all the meetings, but I find them really exciting. We're negotiating with someone for the musical score now, and should know by the end of the year who will be distributing the movie. All of this takes up a lot of my time, though."

Pini's first return to the printed page, however, is a children's book entitled *A Gift of Her Own*. "Berkley Publishing asked us almost three years ago if we wanted to create a children's book for them, and after writing the story I got sidetracked with the comics, and then the movie. Richard [Pini, her husband and the head of WaRP Graphics] called me up and let me know that it was now or never, so I ended up working on it in California."

Pini's return to the comics heralds some dramatic changes to the characters. "One of the major characters dies in the last couple issues," explained Pini. "I've always felt that if we're going to kill a character that I created, I have to do it. A lot of big things happen in the conclusion of *Shards*, and we wanted to make sure people knew that the series ends with a bang."

After *Shards*, Pini will continue to work on the movie, while exploring other possibilities such as a hardcover book published by Greenwich Workshop in the same style as James Gurney's *Dinotopia*. "The movie is still my first priority," Pini said, "but it feels good to get back into comics." ■ *Greg McElhatton*

Latest Xeric Foundation Recipients Announced

Six self-publishing comic creators were recently awarded some $23,000 in grants by the Xeric Foundation, established by **Peter Laird**, co-creator of the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, to encourage new talent. Since its inception in 1992, the Northampton, Mass.-based foundation has given more than $285,000 in grants to self-publishers and non-profit organizations based in western Massachusetts. Only creators based in the United States are eligible for Xeric grants.

The latest recipients include:

- Jessica Abel for ***Artbabe***, an anthology series set partly in contemporary Chicago and partly in the 1940s.
- Art Baxter for ***SPUD***, a slice-of-life comic revolving around characters living in Philadelphia's primarily Catholic blue collar areas.
- Clay Butler for ***Sidewalk Bubblegum***, a collection of his socio-political strips examining universal, timeless themes.
- David Kelly for ***Steven's Comics***, a coming-of-age series about life seen through the eyes of a gay pre-teen.
- Matthew Smith for ***alec dear***, a science-fiction noir tale where a Bogart-esque detective goes on the trail of space aliens in a small town.
- David Yurkovich for ***Death by Chocolate***, a one-shot saga about a small-town candy store owner who, by a freakish set of circumstances, becomes a living being made of pure chocolate.

The latest grants will cover the first half of 1996. Past grants have gone to such creators as David Lasky (*Boom Boom*), Jason Lutes (*Jar of Fools*), Randy Reynaldo (*Adventure Strip Digest*), Jon Lewis (*True Swamp*), Jeff Nicholson (*Lost Laughter*), Megan Kelso (*Girlhero*) and Adrian Tomine (*Optic Nerve*). ■ *Paul J. Grant*

company updates

AC COMICS

AC will be changing the physical format of its *Golden Age Greats* series, which reprints Golden Age comics, from its non-traditional 8-inch by 8.5-inch size to a standard trade paperback size. The change is in response to climbing paper prices.

ANTARCTIC PRESS

Shipping in March is *Shanda #14*, dubbed the "Christmas issue," with a cover penciled by legendary Archie Comics artist Dan DeCarlo. It will be inked by former *Shanda* artist Mike Suguro.

BROADWAY COMICS

In December, *Powers that Be #1* explores the "Chrysler Building Incident" and begins to build upon the complex foundation of the Broadway Universe.

CALIBER COMICS

December is a big month for Caliber in terms of page count and specials. *A.K.A. Goldfish King* leads it off with a $3.95 64-page special of the gritty, noir comic. James Hudnall's *ESPers* $12.95 TPB (originally published by Eclipse and Epic) launches a series of reprints that mark early work by the writer. The $2.95 *Kabuki Color Special* capitalizes on the sexy babe craze with a preview of a new series and a pinup section featuring the art of Mike Grell, Bill Tucci, Buzz, Tony Harris and Bill Koen. Jeff Smith and Charles Vess contribute a short story to *Negative Burn #30*, which adds to the vogueish appeal of the anthology featuring Adam Hughes, Brian Bolland and many others.

CHAOS! COMICS

While February's big book is the fifth and final issue of *Evil Ernie: Straight to Hell* (featuring Ernie vs. Pagan), other products share the month's spotlight: the *Lady Death II: Between Heaven & Hell #3* Gold Commemorative Edition ($25) and the *Lady Death: Ashcan #3* Blue Edition ($10), both of which are special editions of books that were available during Chaos!'s major "Tour of Terror" this year.

COMICO COMICS

January's *Oblivion #6* brings back a major arch-villain (with a twist), while Saker tries to keep the forces of Oblivion together during a major cosmic battle. All for only $2.50!

DARK HORSE COMICS

Frank Miller's next *Sin City* installment, titled *That Yellow Bastard*, is expected to ship in February. Aside from the title, not much else is known. Expect more details next month. As an outspoken advocate for children's rights, author Andrew Vachss has arranged for two percent of the cover price for all issues of his *Cross* mini-series to be donated to the CITVITAS Child Trauma Programs at Baylor College of Medicine.

ENTITY COMICS

January sees the release of *Fem #1*, a five-part mini-series telling the tale of five gorgeous babes who crash-land on Earth. January also sees the conclusion to the four-part *Shaiona*, in which the sexy Shaiona must save Earth from Aster's deadly force.

HARRIS COMICS

Vampirella Strikes #2 features the unthinkable—Vampi teaming up with her once-foe Passion against the Dante Corporation—and a knock-out cover by Mike Deodato Jr.! This December book also offers a free, exclusive limited-edition promo card from Topps Vampirella Gallery set (also out that month). Then in January, another brand-new Vampi series debuts, *Vampirella of Drakulon*, which reprints classic stories of the heroine in full color.

IMAGE COMICS

• BALLISTIC STUDIOS/ TOP COW PRODUCTIONS INC.

Relive the Cyberforce age with 99-cent books from Top Cow including *Cyberforce #3* by Marc Silvestri, Eric Silvestri, Scott Williams, Joe Chiodo and Mike Heisler, and *Cyberforce: Origins Special*—*Cyblade* from Marc Silvestri and Joe Benitez. Both reprints ship in February.

• EXTREME STUDIOS

A group of young "cyber" teens open a window into the virtual dimension as Rob Liefeld writes and draws *Cyberpunx #1* ($2.50), with Don Fargo also handling art duties. It ships in February. Image's first team is collected in a special seven-issue compendium in the Youngblood trade paperback ($16.95) repackaging *Youngblood #6-#8* and *#10*, and *Team Youngblood #9-#13*. It includes first appearances of Knight Saber, a Colonel Bravo, Bloodpool and the suicide of Chapel, and ships in February.

• HIGHBROW ENTERTAINMENT

The Savage Dragon: A Force to Be Reckoned With is a 144-page trade paperback collecting the first six issues of the ongoing series. A special 32-page comic book will be polybagged with the paperback featuring art by Adam Hughes, Karl Kesel, Terry Austin and others. A mere $14.95 gets you this funky book, which ships in January.

• WILDSTORM PRODUCTIONS

Your favorite Wild C.A.T.s will finally be meeting that hellish guy Spawn in the four-part mini-series *Spawn/Wild C.A.T.s* beginning this January, by Alan Moore and Scott Clark. In a story that takes place in two time periods, the Wild C.A.T.s must fight to prevent a bleak future from occurring. January sees the first issue of the four-part mini-series *Team 7: Dead Reckoning* written by Chuck Dixon with an artist to be determined. This one tells the tales behind the break-up of Team 7 and explains how everyone became the heroes they are today.

KITCHEN SINK'S MALLRATS

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Punisher Gets New Duds and a New Life

Writer **John Ostrander**, with artist **Tom Lyle**, have given fans an old **Punisher** in a new way. Now that Frank Castle, in a stunning turnabout, has taken over leadership of a New York crime family, Ostrander promises that things will become more intense.

"The Punisher had gone about as far as he could, both as a book and as a character. The challenge was not so much to find something new for him to do but something new to be. In all of his battles, what had he really accomplished? Every time he killed off the head of a crime family, somebody else would come in, and nine out of 10 times, they're worse than they were before. Now Frank has the opportunity to keep one neighborhood safe, and to belong to something that resembles a family again."

A rejected look for the killing machine by Lyle.

Behind every issue, the question will remain: "Is he going to sell out this family and revert to what he was?" Ostrander plans on keeping Castle very enigmatic. He will be dispensing with the "War Journal" and even thought balloons for Frank, so the reader will have no idea what Frank is thinking or feeling. They'll have to judge him by his actions, which may be contradictory. Also, look for a change in the costume, the return of **Jigsaw**, and the eventual resolution of the Rosalie Carbone plot thread.

Ostrander is actually surprised that he's writing the book. "When I submitted my proposal, I thought there was no way they were ever going to go with this," he recalled. "Then they called back and said, 'This is just what we wanted.' I said, 'You guys are crazy! But if you are, I'm willing to go there.' " ■ *Paul J. Grant*

The Mask Comes Full Circle

Dark Horse Comics' whacked-out superhero—**the Mask**—has a new monthly series written by **Michael Eury**, with art by Neil Vokes, Jay Geldhof and Bruce Timm.

"We're taking the Mask Saturday morning cartoon series and converting it to comics in a way not unlike the way DC converted the Batman animated series into comics," Eury said.

Eury called the approach to the Mask comic series "fun noir. All the action, except for issue #5, takes place in Edge City," Eury explained. "The stories are all seen through the eyes of the Mask's alter ego, **Stanley Ipkiss**. He's a reluctant hero; he's got the mask and doesn't want it. But he's seen what can happen when it lands in the wrong hands, so he's stuck with it."

The comic retains a cross-element from the movie and the cartoon series in that the Mask will constantly morph in and out of different personalities and impressions. "That's what's fun for me as the writer," Eury said. "I can make him be anything I want him to, whenever I need him to be it."

The first two issues will loosely adapt the one-hour first episode of the Mask cartoon series, with a different ending. The Mask gains an arch-enemy in the series, Pretorius, a mad scientist with a human head and a robot body. The twist to this cliché is that when Pretorius loses his head, literally, it sprouts mechanical legs. "He did this to himself so he could be in two places at once," Eury explained, "a must for anyone out for world domination."

Eury said the comic has a similar tone to the cartoon, though it's targeted toward the younger audience. "It's intelligently written, but it is skewed to younger kids," he added. "It does have a harder edge on the visual side, with a bit of a darker feel and appearance. But overall, we didn't want to alienate younger readers."

The Adventures of the Mask premieres in January, and is already plotted out for 12 issues, ending with "The Trial of the Mask." ■ *Gary St. Lawrence*

company updates

KITCHEN SINK PRESS

Couldn't get enough of Stan Lee in "Mallrats"? Check "The Man" out in the $14.95 *Mallrats Movie Book* that features photos, artwork and a reprinting of the script. (We'd shout "Excelsior!" but it seems strange anywhere except in a Marvel write-up.) December is a big month for legendary writer/artist Will Eisner as KSP releases the $17.95 *Will Eisner Sketchbook* and the $16.95 *Will Eisner The Spirit Casebook*. Crow fans will be pleased to find a special Crow-related bonus in the $2.95 *Death Rattle #2*.

LIGHTNING COMICS

Creed's hero Mark goes up against the horrible Void and a whole load of Skeezicks in *Creed #2* this December. But that's not all. Wait till you see the "Bull Naked!" variant cover edition, which is Trent Kaniuga's response to today's nude cover trend and goes for the same three bucks as the regular edition. Meanwhile, no Christmas would be complete without *Black Santa #1*, a December book which stars a disgruntled Santa's helper who escapes from Christmas Town and starts wreaking havoc.

LONDON NIGHT STUDIOS

Razor fans have waited long enough—the femme fatale's origin is finally revealed in *Razor: Cry No More*, a 48-page one-shot shipping in January. This book launches a run of graphic novels from LNS.

MALIBU COMICS

In February, Gambit will team up with the Night Man in an all-new mini-series, while in March, Prime teams up with Captain America. Spider-Man and Green Goblin team up with UltraForce in January's *Ultraforce/Spider-Man #1A* and *#1B*. Both are separate stories with #1A starring the Goblin, while #1B stars Spidey. Also in January is the *Handbook to the Malibu Ultraverse* containing character bios with art from George Pérez, Art Thibert, Bryan Hitch and more. Worf from "Star Trek: The Next Generation" joins the DS9 crew in the 48-page *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine #0* shipping in January.

MARVEL COMICS

Marvel Publisher Stan Lee is the focus of an A&E "Biography" episode airing December 26 at 8 p.m. (EST)/9 p.m. (PST).

MAXIMUM PRESS

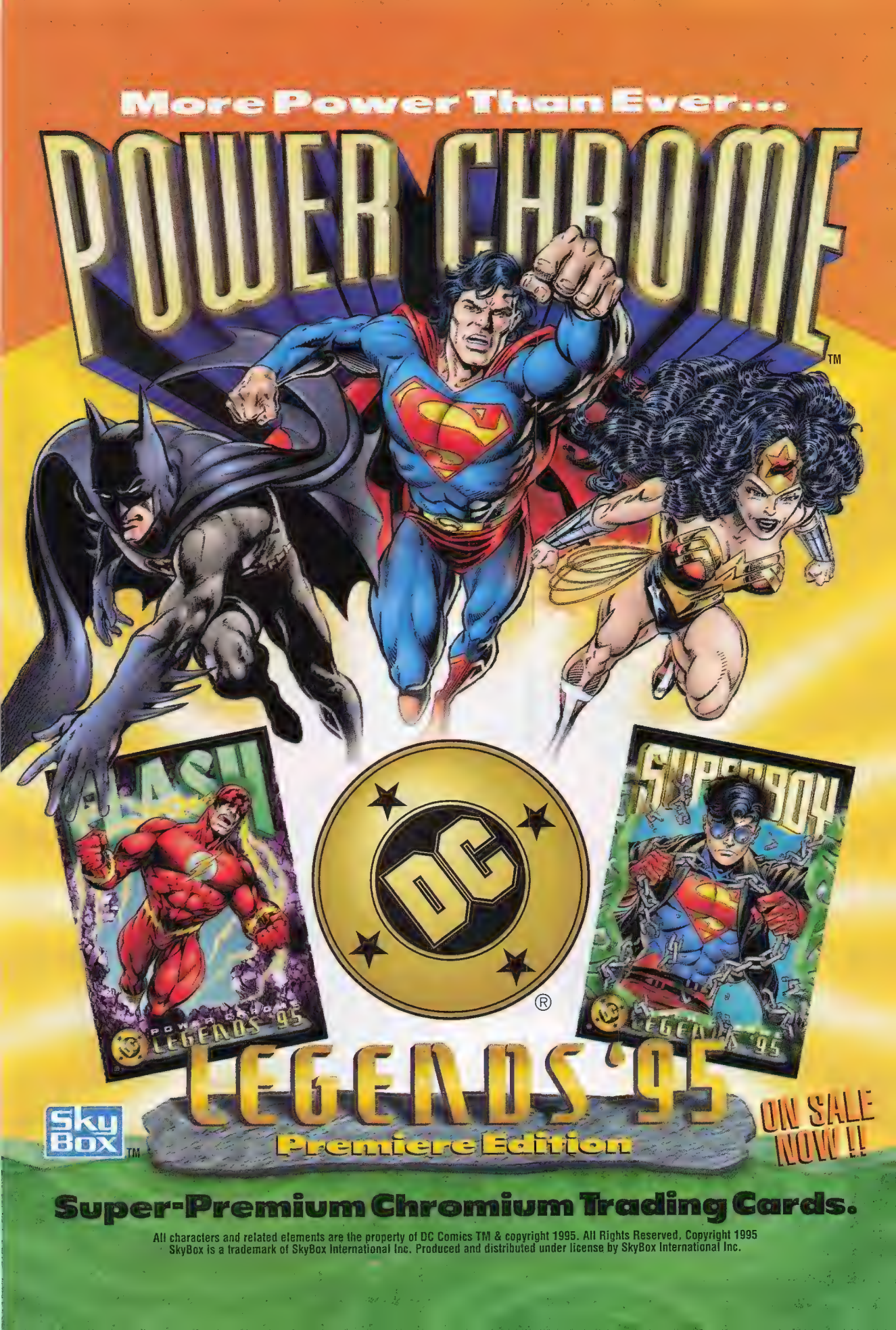
T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents #1 ($2.95) showcases the exploits of Dynamo, Raven, Lightning and Noman as the acclaimed *T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents* comic series is reintroduced. Written by Liefeld and Jim Valentino, and penciled by Liefeld, Chap Yaep, Patrick Lee and Dan Fraga, *T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents* ships this February. *Warchild #1* ($2.50) explodes into a regular series this February featuring *Avengelyne* writer Robert Napton and drawn by Liefeld.

TEKNO•COMIX

Neil Gaiman's Lady Justice makes a guest appearance in *I•BOTS #7* shipping this February.

TOPPS COMICS

Coming in January is *Space: Above and Beyond*, based on the TV series, which kicks off with a three-issue adaptation of the pilot movie. Writing is Roy Thomas, with art by Yannick Paquette and Armando Gil. Issue #1's cover is by Ken Steacy.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BYTE THIS!

The Wizard World Online Update

• *Pitt* writer/artist/creator **Dale Keown** will visit the Wizard Chat Room on December 14 at 7 p.m.-7:45 p.m. (EST). The "Mystery Man," whose art was featured on the cover of *Wizard* #52, will take questions from fans and will talk about his upcoming plans for *Pitt* now that he's left Image to self-publish at Full Bleed Studios.

• *Wizard*'s first two exclusive "official online clubs" have begun scheduling online meetings and special events. The **Asteroid X Club** (for X-Men fans) and the **Avengers Assemble Club** each have a strong membership and active bulletin boards. For more info, look for their bulletin boards in the Marvel folder on the Wizard World message boards. (Members can adopt codenames of their favorite characters!)

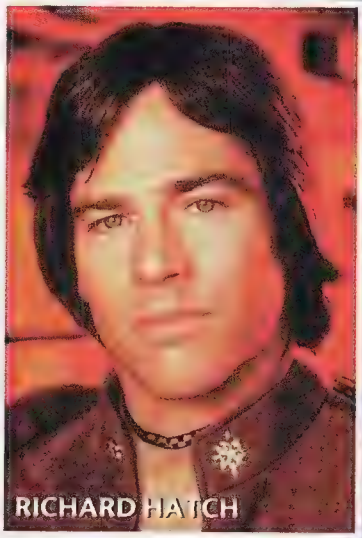
• **InQuest's** Chat Room recently opened its doors to eager *Magic: The Gathering* players looking to tap mana online.

• Getting to Wizard World on America Online is super simple. Just call 800-754-4400 for the free software (Mac or IBM), install it on your computer and use the Keyword: Wizard. ■ *Buddy Scalera*

TV Series' Apollo to Write Galactica Comic

Richard Hatch, the former actor who portrayed **Apollo** on the late '70s TV series "**Battlestar Galactica**," will be writing a mini-series for the new *Battlestar Galactica* comic published by **Maximum Press**.

Hatch, who currently runs a motivational-speaking business, has written treatments for the original "Battlestar Galactica" series, but this marks his first attempt at comic book writing. He will be writing a three- or four-issue mini-series due out in February or March of 1996.


RICHARD HATCH

From the start, Maximum Press was very interested in getting former cast members involved in the series, especially since head honcho **Rob Liefeld** is a big fan of the old series. Maximum tracked Hatch down through his business and found him excited about working on the project.

The premise behind the comic is that the fleet finally discovers the Earth in its search of the lost thirteenth colony of humans, only to find a primordial jungle filled with dinosaurs and the remnants of a civilization. The fleet stays behind, while the Galactica, now commanded by Apollo, leaves for space to continue the search for the thirteenth colony and to lead the ever-pursuing Cylons away from Earth.

Liefeld believes that Hatch will offer some unique insights into the character of Apollo and the Battlestar Galactica Universe as a whole, according to Maximum Press spokesman Matt Hawkins. "Hatch has been working on reviving the series for some time now," Hawkins said.

Although "Battlestar Galactica" was only broadcast for one season (not including "Galactica 1980," the events of which are not incorporated into the comic book), Maximum feels that its syndication on the Sci-Fi Channel, as well as the numerous Battlestar Galactica conventions, have revived interest in the series.

Liefeld and Co. hope to talk to other "Battlestar Galactica" cast members, such as **Dirk Benedict** (seen also in "The A-Team") about writing future comics. ■ *David Borak* W

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A CROAK OF BRILLIANCE

CYBERFROG GETS THE JUMP ON CRIME IN HIS NEW HARRIS COMICS SERIES

BY MATTHEW BRADY

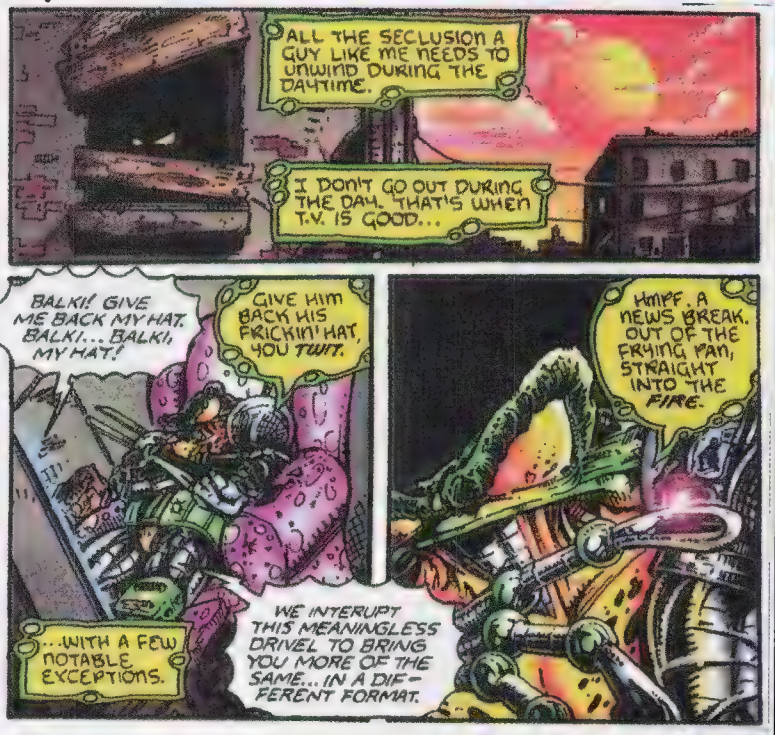
There's a new player on Manhattan's mean streets. He's tough. He fights crime. He's got attitude to spare. And by the way...he's a frog.

Cyberfrog, the newest star of the Harris Comics lineup, is the brainchild of 21-year-old Ethan Van Sciver, self-admitted slacker. In fact, slacking off is exactly what led to the creation of Cyberfrog. "I was a bum," he admits. "I was sitting around all day watching talk shows, until finally my girlfriend told me to do something with my life and draw. I had this little porcelain frog on my art table, and it hit me just like that: Cyberfrog!"

From such humble beginnings, Cyberfrog went on to exist as a black-and-white photocopied book for about five issues before grabbing the attention of Hall of Heroes.

"They thought the book was pretty slammin', and they published two issues. That's when it got noticed by Harris, and they picked it up as an ongoing color series beginning in February, so I couldn't be happier," he says.

When issue #1 comes out, readers will know as much about Cyberfrog as he does himself. "He just appeared in a pond one day," explains Van Sciver. "He's not sure where he comes from, who he is, or what his purpose in life is. He spent the first 10 years of his life roaming around New York doing nothing in particular."



Cyberfrog rests up for a tough night of bad guy bashing.

Cyberfrog's meaningless existence comes to an end when he finds himself drawn to a gathering of one of Manhattan's most notorious minority groups: supervillians. He feels a desire to kick some bad guy butt, which in turn helps him realize his destiny as the savior of the human race.

"He's driven to protect humans," Van Sciver says. "The problem is, he looks like a big armored frog, so people are rather hesitant to accept his charity. That makes him resent humans quite a bit, so he turns into quite the little misanthrope."

So what powers does Cyberfrog use to save the humanity that loathes and fears him? Well, he's a frog, so there is that jumping thing. Also, Cyberfrog will utilize perhaps the grossest power this side of Fin Fang Foom's flatulence. "He can wrap his tongue around someone's head, and implant a small time bomb that explodes about fifteen seconds later," relates Van Sciver.

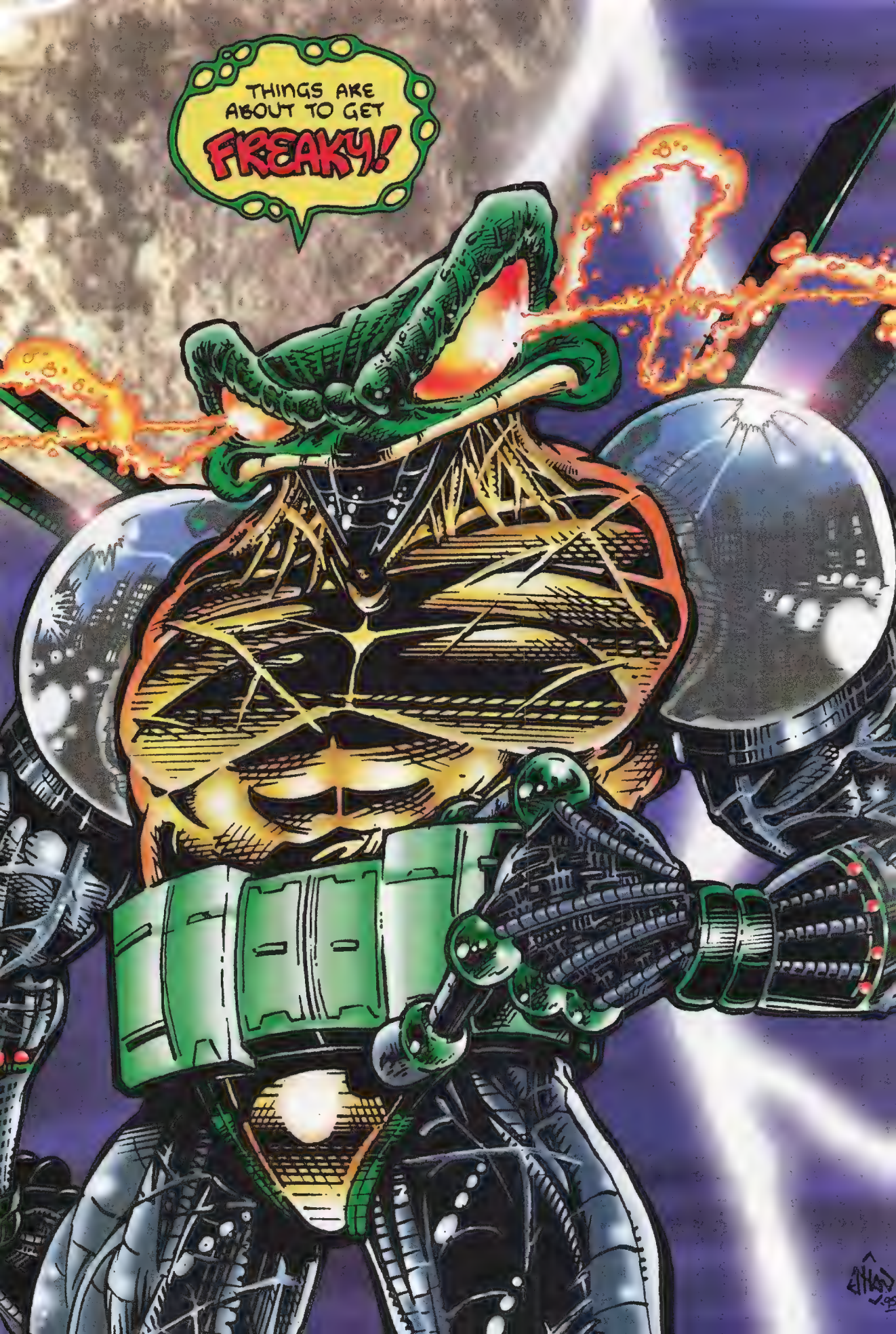
"His main power, though, is his sarcastic wit and sense of humor. He'll approach the biggest, most powerful foe and just make him feel like crap. Then he'll kick his butt."

Van Sciver didn't have to go too far from home for Cyberfrog's personality. "Basically, he's me. By day, he sits in his apartment eating corn chips while watching talk shows. He's my mouthpiece. When I first started, I told everyone that I wasn't going to preach my views, but I'm doing just that."

Cyberfrog's first storyline will introduce him to his mortal enemy who, appropriately enough, is a gigantic drooling fly. "He's connected with Cyberfrog somehow, but you'll have to wait for the issues to see how."

And what about the future? Van Sciver hints that there is a possible crossover with Harris' other hero, Vampirella, "but you'll have to wait and see. Buy the book if you want to see big monsters, lots of cool characters and all-out action. This book kicks ass!" W

Matthew Brady is a freelance writer based in North Carolina who still doesn't believe frog's legs taste like chicken.


THINGS ARE ABOUT TO GET FREAKY!

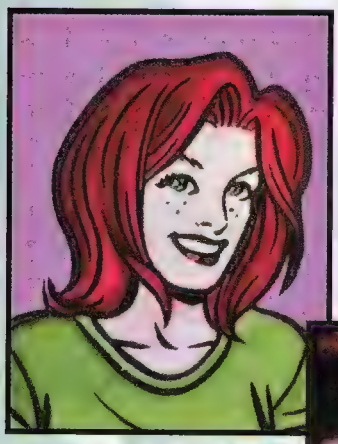
Wizard casts the Alternative Comics movie!

Casting Call II

All right, all you whiners who ask, "How come Batman and Spider-Man get all the movie attention?" Have we got a flick for you! Howzabout a film featuring some of the coolest alternative and small press comic book characters in the land? (Aha! We *thought* we'd get your attention!) Let's see who'd be in a perfect movie…

MADMAN

Playing Frank Einstein is Bill Campbell ("The Rocketeer"), who would give the unique character a human, friendly quality. We think his creator Mike Allred'd be proud.



JOE

Madman's main squeeze would be portrayed to a cute T by Laura Leighton of TV's "Melrose Place."

By a bunch of *Wizard* staffers

All photos: Everett Collection, unless otherwise noted.

DWIGHT

Sin City's urban warrior looks a lot like Willem DaFoe ("Platoon," "Clear & Present Danger"), so what the hey?

MARV

This was a tough one. We needed somebody bulky with a weird nose to be *Sin City*'s bruiser. Liam Neeson ("Darkman," "Schindler's List") fits the bill!

CEREBUS

We wanted a squeaky, distinctive voice for Dave Sim's creation. Joe Pesci ("Goodfellas," "Lethal Weapon 2" and "My Cousin Vinny") is our man.

CONCRETE

We need a passionate, thoughtful and introspective type of actor to play this Congressional speechwriter. Why not Tom Hanks ("Forrest Gump," "Apollo 13")?

MARTHA WASHINGTON

This'd be no stretch for Jada Pinkett, since she practically played the *Give Me Liberty* character in "Tales from the Crypt: Demon Knight." She had the haircut and everything.

GRENDEL (HUNTER ROSE)

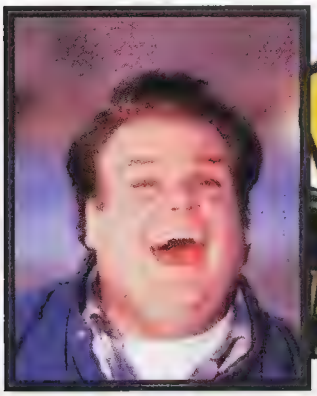
Billy Zane sure can play an icy cold, ruthless killer with a sense of humor. He did it in "Dead Calm" and "Tales from the Crypt: Demon Knight," so he'd be excellent for Matt Wagner's assassin.

FLAMING CARROT

Ut! Robin Williams ("Mrs. Doubtfire," "Jumanji") would be perfect as creator Bob Burden's quirky hero.

CHEESE

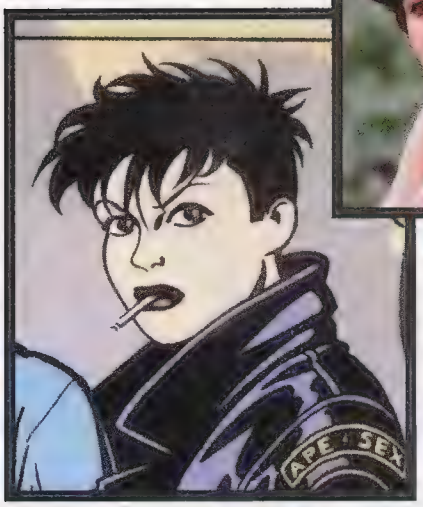
Since we need some more violent wit, Chris Farley ("Tommy Boy," "Saturday Night Live") would complement his pal Milk quite nicely.



welcome to our world...

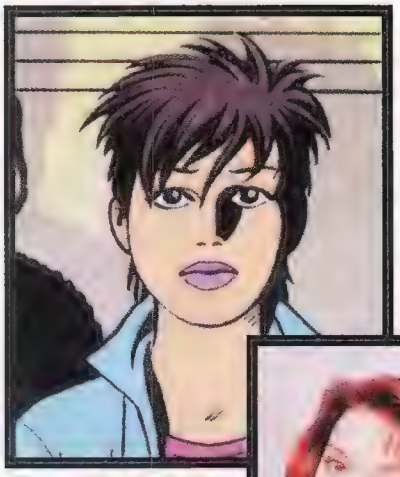
MILK

Violent wit would seem to suit Denis Leary ("The Ref") quite well, so he'd be pretty on-target as Evan Dorkin's Milk. Plus, it does a body good. (But maybe not in this case...)



HOPEY

Maria Conchita Alonso ("Predator 2") would play this punkette from the Hernandez Brothers' *Love & Rockets* to perfection.



MAGGIE

Elizabeth Peña ("La Bamba," "Jacob's Ladder") would be excellent as this *L & R* character.

Okay, okay... so a movie with this many characters would probably be a big mess. But so what? Don't tell us you wouldn't want to see it. After all, with crap like "Judge Dredd" and "Tank Girl" being spewed outta Hollywood, this would be a hugely entertaining alternative comic bonanza! **W**

The Wizard staff just went to Taco Bell. Please clear the area.

CAUGHT IN A WEB

As James Cameron's Spider-Man film is tangled in legal problems, we take a look at Spidey's roller coaster media history

James Cameron

By Rob Allstetter

Think *you're* bummed about this Spider-Man movie that's been "just around the corner" for years now?

Imagine being Stan Lee. Marvel Comics' founding father has been trying to get the web-slinger on to the big screen for nearly a decade without any success. And even Lee, the ever-optimistic chairman of Marvel Films and Spidey's co-creator, can't help but shake his head.

"Sure, I'm frustrated," Lee says. "It's like I can just reach out and touch the movie, but it's just a little out of my reach.

"We have the top director in Hollywood, Jim Cameron, who is gung-ho to do 'Spider-Man.' We have a great story. But we have to wait until these things are cleared up."

"These things" are the ongoing legal entanglements over exactly who owns the movie rights to Spider-Man, not to mention the always precarious financial standing of high-rolling Carolco Pictures, the latest in a line of production companies attached to the project. (Carolco, some may recall, was the think tank that gave us "Terminator 2" and the Cameron-scripted "Rambo.") An attorney representing Carolco in the litigation said earlier this year that he anticipated a resolution by the fall; contacted recently for an update, he reported that a trial date still has not been set.

"I'm not a lawyer, and this is way over my head," Lee says. "It will be until at least next year and could be many, many more months to come until things are settled. But Jim Cameron is as eager to start this movie as I am, and when it's done, it will be bigger than anything before it."

Cameron, who produced this fall's "Strange Days," is currently working on other projects (see sidebar). A representative of Cameron's Lightstorm Entertainment says, "Don't expect the [Spider-Man] movie in the theaters next year. It's on the shelf right now, and there's no pre-production work being done."

The movie is part of Spidey's checkered history in other media that includes animated series from three different decades, a short-lived, live-action television series and even a live-action Spider-Man TV series from Japan. They've all ranged from truly dreadful to the top-rated success of the current cartoon on Fox.

But clearly a big-budget Spider-Man movie with Cameron involved would be a crowning achievement for Lee. He's endured movie flops like "Howard the Duck," "The Punisher" and "Captain America," while watching friend and Batman creator Bob Kane enjoy three immensely popular Batman films—with a fourth Batflick planned for just two years from now.

"Hey, I'm envious of them, but I'm happy about the success of 'Batman' and movies like 'The Mask' and 'The Crow,' " Lee says. "It shows what a tremendous treasure-trove of material there is in comic books."

Lee thinks he has a jewel in the making with "Spider-Man." He raves about a 50-page treatment written by Cameron.

"It's a great story. It's the Spider-Man that we all know and love. He didn't screw around with the character," Lee says. "But it's written in such a way, that it's new, fresh and exciting."

Lee won't reveal any details of Cameron's story, including the villain. Early speculation centered around Doctor Octopus, Green Goblin and Venom.

It doesn't look like it'll be Venom, however. He's getting his own film from New Line Cinema, which will be written by David S. Goyer, a screenwriter who's also working on "Ghost Rider," "Blade" and "Doctor Strange" movies, as well as "The Crow: City of Angels" and a Nick Fury TV movie.

"David's a fine writer. He's one of these guys that really has the feeling for these characters," Lee says. "It very well may come out before [the Spider-Man movie], but it will be totally different."

Everybody has their feelings about who should play Spider-Man. When Lee appeared on "The Dennis Miller Show" two years ago, Miller suggested a then fairly unknown Jim Carrey, who has since starred in two comics-to-film blockbusters: "The Mask" and "Batman Forever."

More than likely, Spidey's good pals Doc Ock and Green Goblin will grace the silver screen with our webbed hero.

Lights, Cameron, Action?

James Cameron seems a little frustrated. After planning to shoot "Spider-Man" as his follow-up film to "True Lies," he's had to put the project on the back burner, going on to "Titanic" as his next film. In a conversation designed to promote his latest production, "Strange Days" (he produced and wrote the script; Kathryn Bigelow, one of his ex-wives, directed), Cameron speaks longingly of his Spider-Man project.

James Cameron is just waiting for the green light on "Spider-Man."

" 'Spider-Man' is on hold until after 'Titanic,' " he says. "There was no way to make it first. The lawsuit is not settled; it's a real rat's nest right now. The rights are a mess. I have a script that I really like and that I'm ready to make if they can get that all sorted out. As soon as the lawyers are done, you know, slaughtering themselves at great expense to their clients, we'll make it."

Ironically, Cameron and his Lightstorm Entertainment production company aren't even directly involved in the multi-party litigation. Still, this isn't to say that he is without significant artistic or emotional stakes in the issue. Cameron authored the script himself, with a specific vision of Spidey. "It's basically the origin story, as I read it and remember it from my youth," he explains.

Focusing now on "Titanic," a film he describes as "a fictional epic love story that takes place on the Titanic," Cameron won't make any commitments as to which actor will nail the plum lead role in "Spider-Man." "I don't have anyone in mind for the role, not really, because it depends on when I do it," he adds. "It's going to be a 17-year-old actor, and if I do the film in three years, they're going to be 14 right now, and I probably don't know who they are. It will probably be an unknown, a 17- or 18-year-old; it's not going to be Tom Cruise or Brad Pitt because I'm playing him as a high school senior, which is what he is, what he was in the origin story."

So with "Titanic" due out for Christmas in 1996, don't look for "Spider-Man" to hit the big screen until at least 1997.

■ *Jenny Peters (with additional reporting by Tom Russo)*

"I don't think it will be a famous actor," Lee says. "I think it will be a relative unknown, but the other roles will be played by big-name stars.

"I just can't see Brad Pitt with his face masked for half the movie. I wouldn't think any big-name actor would want to do it. Ultimately, though, this choice will come down to who Jim Cameron wants."

Even no movie at all might be better than a repeat performance of the "Amazing Spider-Man" live-action TV series, which ran sporadically on CBS from Sept. 14, 1977 to July 6, 1979 and has recently been rebroadcast on the USA Network and Sci-Fi Channel. Nicholas Hammond starred as a John Romita-like Peter Parker, and the late Robert F. Simon was a crusty J. Jonah Jameson in every episode except the pilot.

"The only involvement I had was that I was complaining about the damned thing all the time," Lee recalls. "Nobody would listen. I would make a pest of myself, but I had no authority.

"All the things that made Spider-Man a success were totally left out. There was no humor, no charm. It was a guy with a ridiculous camera slung over his shoulder. It was so one-dimensional."

The series featured no supervillains from the comics, and Spider-Man wore a second-rate costume (the web-cartridges-on-the-outside look, however, is now part of Spider-Man's new costume in the comics). Spidey did little web-slinging, although the creators tried to emphasize heights with lots of wall-crawling and scenes on top of buildings. Stuntman Fred Waugh was spotlighted crawling up the Empire State Building in *TV Guide*, the most notoriety "Amazing Spider-Man" ever really received.

The '70s American TV show "Amazing Spider-Man" took some liberties with the character.

Despite encouraging ratings for "Amazing Spider-Man," CBS already had "Wonder Woman" and "The Incredible Hulk," and so Spidey was bounced all over the schedule. On Sept. 5-6, 1978, CBS broadcast a new "Spider-Man" episode, a two-hour Doctor Strange movie and a "Hulk" rerun. The competition? "Roots," which generated some of the highest TV ratings ever.

"Amazing Spider-Man" ended after 13 episodes.

"It was one of the great disappointments in my life," says Dan Jurgens, who recently joined the Spider-family as writer and artist of *Sensational Spider-Man*. "I remember watching once or twice and I couldn't take any more."

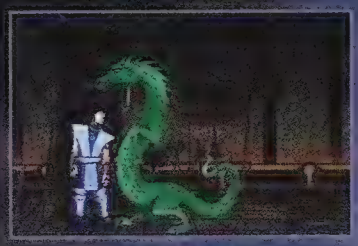
Jurgens is able, however, to take more of the current Spider-Man animated series on Fox, which follows the 1960s series on ABC—everyone remembers that theme song—and the early 1980s shows on NBC that featured Spidey in both solo action and with his "Amazing Friends," Firestar and Iceman.

"For the most part, I like it," Jurgens says of the new show which has already been renewed for a third season in 1996. "They're taking a writing approach with a steady backdrop. Artistically, it doesn't come up to the writing in terms of design and art direction. It's just not quite up to a ['Batman: The Animated Series'], although that may be an unfair comparison."

The show was a ratings smash in its first season, and is doing well in the second despite a stern challenge from "The Mask" on CBS. It joins "X-Men" to give Fox a one-two Marvel punch in its Saturday morning lineup.

"There's a lot of care, a lot of energy and a lot of talent involved," Lee says. "Plus, we control it ourselves. In the past, we did what the networks wanted us to do."

It also helps that Margaret Loesch, president of the Fox



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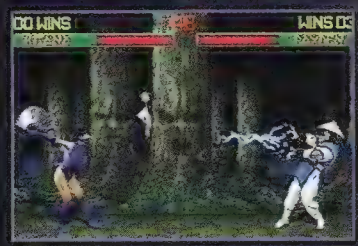

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Children's Network, used to work with Lee at Marvel.

"She's one of the few people in the animation business who understands superhero comics," Lee says. "She's been terrific to work with."

Lee points to fellow Executive Producer Avi Arad, Supervising Producer Bob Richardson and Producer/Story Editor John Semper for the success of the series.

"These guys live with this show. They don't go home at 5:30 every day," Lee says. "And the results speak for themselves."

"I've been a Spider-Man fan for years," Semper says. "I watched the first television series, and, as great fun as it was, I wondered why they didn't just do the comic book stuff. On my show, we're going to do the comic book stuff."

"In terms of each individual episode, we treat it like a mini-movie," says Richardson. "We try to create that kind of scope. We've tried to keep it as consistent as we could with the comics. There is a bit of a problem in that comics over 30 years have changed dramatically at times. We try to go for the essence and the underpinnings and take that as the base."

Semper came aboard the show late, but, starting with the second season, he has had sufficient time to do season-long story arcs.

The current season is "Neogenic Nightmare." The third season beginning next fall will tentatively be "Sins of the Father," which focuses on relationships between fathers and their sons or daughters, including Mary Jane Watson and her father, Robbie Robertson and his son, and Harry and Norman Osborn.

"The story has to do with the fact that, as parents, what we do throughout our lives will reflect on our children," says Robert Skir, who, with writing partner Marty Isenberg, is contributing stories to the third season.

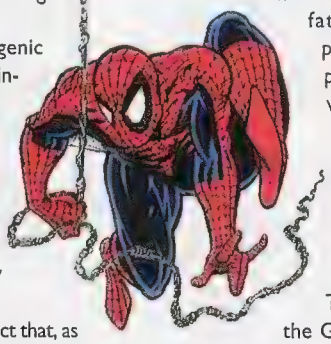
"I think it's a wonderful theme. It's very ambitious to carry off a story for 13 episodes, but it's such a rich theme and there are so many stories to portray it."

Marvel heroes will continue to guest-star and the Green Goblin appears in the third season.

"It really runs the gamut of things," says Richardson. "Look for more fun to come."

And nothing runs this bizarre range better than Japan's version of "Spider-Man," which aired on TV Tokyo from 1978-79. The show stemmed from Marvel's deal with the production company Toei. For three years, Toei was allowed to use Marvel characters as it saw fit. The first project was "Spider-Man," a live-action show, in which motocross racer Hiroshi Yamashiro was granted superpowers when he was injected with a shot of arachnid extract and given Spider Bracelets by the prince of the planet Spider. Entrusted with the mission of avenging his father and the prince, whose planet's population was obliterated by the evil Professor Monster, our hero had a number of helpful objects at his disposal. The best being the GP-7, a flying car that could combine with the flying object Marveler and form the cockpit for the giant robot Leopardon.

Fox's "Spider-Man" is swinging up in the ratings while having fun with the character.



The premise for the show was pretty far-fetched, especially with the presence of the robot, and the special effects were fairly cheesy, but the show was popular during its short tenure.

Despite several other Marvel characters which were considered for shows, including Moon Knight, "Spider-Man" was the only Marvel-based TV show produced by Toei.

But just how does all this movie and TV stuff effect the comics? According to Spider-Man Editor-in-Chief Bob Budiansky, not too much.

"The excitement created by our audience is independent of the cartoon," says Budiansky, who has not read Cameron's movie treatment. "What inspires people to buy the comic books is what goes on in the comic books.

"I did talk to some people from the cartoon, though it was many months ago, about The Clone storyline. I asked if this would be a problem for them and they said, 'Absolutely not.' I think they thought of it as more fodder for them to use in the future."

But, there is still a slight lingering cartoon influence. Marvel publishes *Spider-Man Adventures*, which adapts the TV stories, and, according to Budiansky, this winter the company will be packaging Spider-Man comics with a cassette of the Ramones doing the theme song from the 1960s cartoon. The song is part of an all-star collection of bands doing Saturday morning theme songs.

"It's great," says Budiansky. "Everybody who's heard it in the office has just loved it."

Someday, maybe someday, there will be a Spider-Man movie theme too. Just don't hold your breath.

"Spider-Man and His Amazing Friends" teamed Spidey with Firestar, Iceman and the occasional li'l puppy Ms. Lion.

Rob Allstetter regrets knowing anything about the Japanese "Spider-Man." (The planet Spider???)

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SEP

The Fine Folks at the International House of Color Show you HOW COMICS ARE COMPUTER COLORED

WHAT would you say is the single biggest difference between comic books now and the way they looked 10 or 15 years ago? Sure, "hot" artists come and go, and the paper and printing has improved, but the biggest advancement of all may be the widespread use of computer color separation.

Comics have traditionally been colored in accordance with the printing industry's standard of "four-color separation." To produce a printed full-color image, the colors are "separated" into four basic colors: cyan (blue), magenta (red), yellow and black. Different combinations of these four colors are able to represent an almost infinite number of different colors. Y'know, adding yellow and blue makes green...

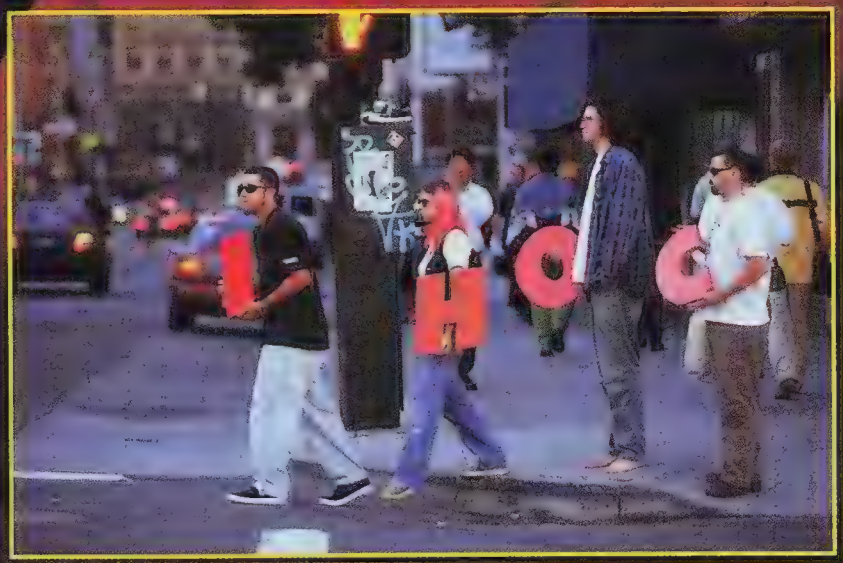
Color separating comics the "old" way meant working manually and quickly with a limited palette of colors available. There is a reason why Superman and Spider-Man are similarly colored; the blues are simple combinations of cyan with magenta, and the reds are made with magenta and yellow. Shading? Get out the old Zip-a-tone—a sheet of adhesive dot patterns that artists had to cut out with a knife and stick on the artwork to simulate different shades of grey.

You'd think comics would be the last frontier of "handcrafted" artwork. Well, technology marches on and—like everything else in life—computers are the wave of the future. The ability to separate colors with a computer program now opens up a whole world of possibilities.

Turn the page to see just how it's done.

BY MATT TIERNEY • PHOTOS BY ROBERT BECK

ARATION ANXIETY



THE STREETS OF SAN FRANCISCO REUBEN, LEA, ABEL AND BILL STRUT THEIR STUFF. AT TOP: BILL CHILLS.

COMPUTER color separation was pioneered in the late 1980s when Steve Oliff and his gang at Olyoptics colored *Akira* for Epic Comics. *Akira* became the first-ever feature-length comic traditionally drawn and inked to be fully colored on the computer. A custom software program called Comicprep was developed for the project, and is still in use today, along with the Macintosh-popularized Photoshop.

Comicprep and Photoshop both work in similar manners, but have very different origins and a number of different features. Comicprep was developed specifically for coloring comics and is still in use at Olyoptics and International House of Color (IHOC) on books such as *Savage Dragon*, *Pitt* and *Spawn*. Comicprep-colored books sport the graduated or blended colors that were difficult, if not impossible, to achieve 20 years ago. With Comicprep, the colorist can also "colorize" the inked line art of the artwork.

Photoshop is a software program developed by Adobe for retouching and colorizing photographs, and has since been adapted and modified for dozens of other uses, including comic coloring. Photoshop offers the added "bells and whistles" of being able to add "lens flare" effects (the gleaming reflections on armor and swords) and photographic images such as the moon. Photoshop can also "color" the line art, plus you can fade and blend it. Check out *Cyberforce* for an example of a Photoshop colored book.

We sent this month's Spider-Man cover out to the folks at IHOC in San Francisco, and you get to tag along to see the coloring in action (well, in photographs anyway).

IHOC is a small color shop that was opened a little over a year ago, when four young colorists flew from the Olyoptics nest to venture out into the coloring world on their own. Reuben Rude, Abel Mouton, Bill Zindel and Reuben's cousin Lea Rude hooked up and, with some help and a lot of work from Erik Larsen's Highbrow Entertainment, they were quickly in business.

THE PACKAGE ABEL RIPS INTO THE FEDEX BOX. INCLUDED ARE THE ORIGINAL ART, XEROXES FOR COLORING, AND INKER JOHN ROMITA SR. HAS EVEN INCLUDED A COLOR GUIDE FOR REFERENCE.

THE COLOR GUIDE REUBEN'S JOB AS THE COLORIST IS TO MAKE A COLOR GUIDE FOR THE SEPARATORS TO FOLLOW IN THE COMPUTER. HE USES MARKERS, PRISMACOLOR PENCILS, AND EVEN PAINTS WITH GOUACHE TO CREATE A FINISHED "PAINTING" THAT THE SEPARATORS CAN ACCURATELY REPRODUCE WITH THE COMPUTER.

REUBEN'S GUIDE (ON THE LEFT), ALTHOUGH MORE INTRICATE, ENDS UP LOOKING PRETTY CLOSE TO ROMITA'S.

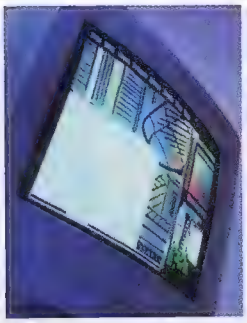
ENTER THE COMPUTER IN THE MEANTIME, BILL THROWS THE ORIGINAL ART UP ON THE FLATBED SCANNER (AT LEFT), CREATING A HIGH RESOLUTION COMPUTER FILE WHICH DOUBLES AS THE OUTLINE THAT THE SEPARATORS "FILL-IN" WITH COLOR. IT ALSO SERVES AS THE BLACK "INKS" THAT SHOW UP IN THE FINAL PRODUCT.

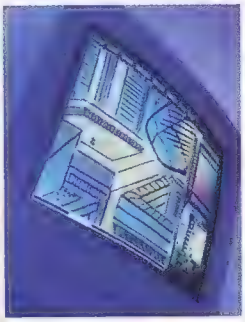
FROM THIS POINT ONWARD, ALL OF THE WORK IS DONE ON THE COMPUTER SCREEN.

PAINT BY NUMBERS AS EXPLAINED EARLIER, THE COMIC WILL BE PRINTED WITH ONLY FOUR COLORS. YOU CAN SEE ON THE PREVIOUS PAGE, THAT REUBEN USED A LOT MORE THAN FOUR MARKERS TO COLOR THE GUIDE. THE COMPUTER ALLOWS THE SEPARATOR TO CHOOSE FROM A PALATTE OF THOUSANDS OF COLORS THAT HE VISUALLY MATCHES TO THE COLOR GUIDE. THE COMPUTER AUTOMATICALLY ASSIGNS EACH COLOR A "CODE" OR "FORMULA" THAT IT WILL LATER USE TO SPLIT THE FILE INTO THE FOUR SEPARATE PRINTING COLORS. THE "FORMULA" FOR THE BASIC RED IN SPIDEY'S SOCK IS "M80Y87," WHICH MEANS 80% MAGENTA (RED) AND 87% YELLOW.

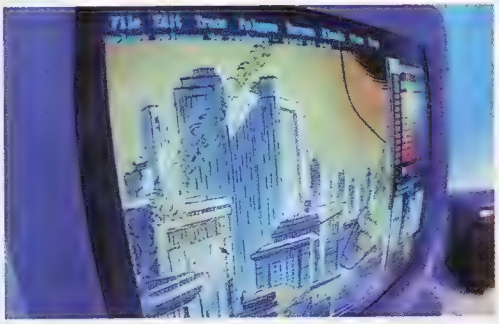
COMICPREP WORKS ON A POLYGON SYSTEM. THE SEPARATOR SELECTS THE AREA HE WANTS TO COLOR BY USING HIS MOUSE TO TRACE AROUND THE OUTLINE OF SPIDEY'S FOOT, CREATING A "POLYGON" IN THE SHAPE OF THE FOOT. HE CAN THEN FILL THIS AREA WITH ANY COLOR OR COMBINATION OF COLORS HE CHOOSES FROM THE COMPUTERS PALATTE. BY LAYERING POLYGONS ON TOP OF EACH OTHER, HE CAN THEN LIGHTEN AREAS OF THE FOOT TO CREATE HIGHLIGHTS, AND DARKEN AREAS TO CREATE SHADING BY BLENDING IN CYAN AND BLACK. AND, OF COURSE, IF HE DOESN'T LIKE IT, IT'S A SIMPLE COMMAND TO "ERASE" AND START OVER.

WORK FROM THE BACK THE FIRST THING COLORED IS THE BACKGROUND, IN THIS CASE A THREE COLOR GRADUATED (BLENDED) SKY. ABEL LAYS DOWN THE THREE COLORS IN SEPARATE POLYGONS, BLUE AT THE TOP, RED IN THE MIDDLE AND YELLOW AT THE HORIZON (ABOVE), AND THEN BLENDS THEM TOGETHER (RIGHT). NEXT UP, COLORING THE CITYSCAPE...





STACKING PAPER TO COLOR THE DOZENS OF OVERLAPPING BUILDINGS, ABEL TRACED SQUARE POLYGONS OVER THE BUILDINGS, STARTING AT THE BACK (OR HORIZON), AND JUST WORKED HIS WAY FORWARD. "IT'S LIKE STACKING PIECES OF PAPER," HE EXPLAINS. THE BUILDINGS ARE LAYERED POLYGONS THAT HE THEN ADDS SHADOWS AND SUNLIGHT TO.



DRESSING SPIDEY LAST, BUT HARDLY LEAST, IS COLORING SPIDER-MAN. STARTING AT THE BACK AGAIN, ABEL COLORS SPIDEY SECTION BY SECTION, LAYERING THE POLYGONS ON TOP OF ONE ANOTHER. HE STARTS WITH THE CHEST (1), THEN THE LEGS AND BUTT (2) ARE ONE BLUE POLYGON. THEN HE WORKS ON THE ANKLE (3) AND SO ON, ADDING BLENDS TO CREATE SHADOWS AND HIGHLIGHTS AS HE GOES (4,5). THIS HELPS TO GIVE SPIDEY A MORE LIFELIKE "THREE-DIMENSIONAL" LOOK. FINALLY, THE DETAILS SUCH AS THE WEBLINE (6), ARE COLORED IN.

ALL DONE? NOW THAT THE FILE IS COMPLETELY COLORED, A COLOR PROOF IS PRINTED OUT AND SENT TO THE CLIENT FOR APPROVAL. ONCE FINAL APPROVAL IS GIVEN, THE FILE IS READY FOR OUTPUT. THE COLOR FILE IS "SEPARATED" AND OUTPUT AS FOUR PIECES OF FILM; CYAN, MAGENTA, YELLOW, AND BLACK. THE FILM IS SENT TO THE PRINTER AND USED TO PRINT THE COMIC. BUT THAT'S A WHOLE OTHER STORY... W

Matt Tierney hasn't done this much writing since he was in college.

IN YOUR FACE

Rob Liefeld's roller coaster career has been marked by one constant—he's the boss

ROB LIEFELD has come down from his tower and he's smiling. This is nothing new for his wife Joy. She's seen this look before. But as Liefeld plops himself down for dinner and the grin shows no sign of disappearing, she can't stand it any longer.
"Okay. Why are you so happy?"
"Because I just drew something cool," he replies.

BORN IN FULLERTON, Calif. on October 3, 1967, the urge to draw kicked in with young Rob by age eight, when he started doing primitive tracings over comic books, recalls his father, Paul. By age 10 the talent had become more advanced, as Liefeld was labeled "a not very good student" by those teachers who couldn't stomach Rob cluttering up his test papers with cartoons. "Rob would draw deep into the night," remembers the elder Liefeld. "We had mixed emotions about his wanting to draw comics. It wasn't an area that we would have thought of as a way to make a living."

But circumstances made the question of Liefeld doing anything else moot. Investment problems plus his father's ongoing medical problems brought the Liefeld family to the brink of financial ruin. Liefeld painfully recalls those days. "My parents lost the house I grew up in. We had gone from being upper middle-class to living in an apartment in the worst part of town. We had literally lost everything. I was terrified, but not for myself. I could live in a box without any problem. My fear was for my family. So while still in high school I felt that if something was going to happen, it was up to me to get to a certain level in comics and support my family."

The rest is the stuff of legends. His trip to Wonder Con in Oakland, Calif. in 1985 resulted in his getting hired by DC and Marvel at the same time. His early work on the *Hawk and Dove* mini-series led to his million-selling work on *The New Mutants* and *X-Force*. A glowing reputation among comic fans did little to dampen his insecurities at home. "I was the sole support of my family for six years and I was scared every day. The reason I started inking my own works was so that I could bring in extra money."

BY MARC SHAPIRO

Photographs by John W. McDonough

LIEFELD WANDERS INTO THE OFFICES OF EXTREME STUDIOS—one of the Image Comics studios that he helped co-found in 1992—dressed in the usual: shorts, sandals and T-shirt. A mere mile from Angels Stadium in Anaheim, Calif., the multi-story building is a monument to corporate America. The elevator doors open and people get in. The suits get off on the lower floors. The jeans, shorts, sandals and heavy metal T-shirts ride all the way to the top, where Image Comics/Extreme Studios occupy the majority of the floor.

The Image world is a masterful mix of ideas. The computer terminals and telephone banks are strictly '90s state-of-the-art business as usual. But the toys are scattered around. The comics piled high and tacked to walls, the drawings being churned out in the bullpen by young, diligent hands to the accompaniment of grunge, technopop and rap music, all reflecting every teenager's fantasy environment. This is the playpen that Liefeld built.

The 28-year-old Liefeld walks in and smiles his easy smile, still looking very much the teenager. The business face goes on, but a sense of boyish vulnerability peeks out from around the edges. He reaches out to shake hands, offering his left rather than the traditional right. "I bruised my right hand by smashing it into a wall," he explains matter-of-factly. "I was trying to get some drawing done and people just kept coming up and interrupting me. I just got real frustrated and punched a wall."

SUCH IS THE LIFE OF ROB LIEFELD—a temperamental but talented artist, a big kid full of bigger ideas. By age 23, Liefeld had shot to the top of the Marvel world, drawing its *New Mutants* title in 1990. His impact on *New Mutants* was so great that the title was canceled for a new series in *X-Force*. With momentum like a tidal wave, he created Image Comics with six other Marvel artists in 1992, and unleashed its flagship title, *Youngblood*. As Liefeld settled in as a publisher, he found getting his comic out on a monthly basis quite difficult, causing fans to wait a long time between issues, and his popularity slowly cooled. In an effort to get back on track, Liefeld took a eight-month sabbatical in '93, but has yet to settle down into a monthly series. He did only five issues of *Youngblood* upon his return, which led to a two-issue stint on *Badrock*, and is now focused on handling the bulk of Extreme and Maximum Press covers.

Liefeld, who admits to being 28 but concedes that "most days I feel like 50," is an enigma of the first order. At a very young age, and with his comic book future already painted in bright colors, Liefeld, along with Todd McFarlane and Erik Larsen, flew in the face of the comic book establishment and stepped on a lot of toes when they formed Image Comics. After two years of phenomenal growth, the Image-Extreme combine took a hit in 1994 when a decrease in sales forced Liefeld "to take a temperature, and my instinct told me that some of our characters were old and tired." He retrenched, and against all logic created Maximum Press for his more offbeat creations. Now he appears to have weathered the storm.

"A year ago I felt we were going to fall off the cliff," admits Liefeld of the dark times. "Our books weren't selling well and I had made some bad moves. I had to become smarter and reinvent myself. Twice in my career I wanted to do some really radical things and just gamble, but then I realized that I've got 75 people on my payroll and a family to support. So I pulled back just a little."

"Rob has never been adverse to a risk," says Extreme/Maximum Press Marketing Director Matt Hawkins, "but he's not a stupid taker."

Above Left: Doodlin' away
Left: Badrock, Liefeld's pet character
Opposite: An Extreme critique session

"IT'S TIME TO RUN FOR THE BORDER!" Liefeld yells after getting a quick briefing from Hawkins, who, along with artist Dan Fraga, pile into Liefeld's four-wheel Bronco for a ride to Taco Bell. Liefeld pulls out of the lot, yelling at Fraga that he should try to get the number of the babe they just passed. He clicks in his new favorite CD, a collection of '80s hits, and heads down the main drag. He pulls into the restaurant parking lot and goes inside, dutifully ordering exactly what Fraga predicted—light chicken burrito, no cheese, side of rice, light Taco Supreme and a Mountain Dew. Liefeld settles in to chow down. "We're here every day," says Liefeld. "I love the food. I go to the nice restaurants when I have my Hollywood meetings, but I just like the idea of ordering my food and getting it in a matter of moments. I guess I'm just sort of a serve-yourself kind of guy."

Back from lunch, Liefeld goes into his office and shuts the door. He sits down on the floor and pulls out his drawing board. The business seems to melt away. Suddenly he's the kid who grew up loving to draw. He has to get two covers done by the end of the day. But, despite the pressure of his self-imposed deadline, he is smiling. And between pencil strokes comes a long mental look in the mirror.

"I'd like to think I'm a fairly positive person, but I know for a fact that I'm very cynical. Marriages, relationships, entertainment. I believe everything is a conspiracy. I know the cold reality. One thing I tell everyone is to trust no one. This could all go away tomorrow. When success comes, just put a clock on it, because eventually it will leave you."

Liefeld's progress is interrupted by the telephone ringing. His meeting in Hollywood has been postponed for another day. He does not look upset.

Later in the day, editor-writer Eric Stephenson, Matt Hawkins and Image's resident numbers cruncher Ferdinand Salas are called in. Liefeld must play Solomon in deciding the fate of a book, *New Men*, which, while having a loyal following, is not really carrying the freight sales-wise. Whether to cancel the book, revamp it or continue with its marginal sales is the topic of conversation. Liefeld, whose furrowed brow and perplexed expression indicates he'd rather be having any conversation but this one, entertains suggestions from all quarters before tabling the discussion and proclaiming that he will think about it overnight and come in with an answer the next day.

"This is one of the toughest things I've had to do," sighs Liefeld after the meeting breaks up. "I don't like considering killing certain titles, especially when I consider them strong titles. *New Men* is one of those books that we've tagged to succeed at all costs. All I can do at this point is go home, sit down and take everything into consideration and come up with an answer."

ROB LIEFELD HAS PLENTY OF OPINIONS. He offers them up, firing off controversial comments and tidbits without ever looking up from his drawing. "I know I'm constantly knocked by other people in the industry and it's never really angered me. In fact, I find all that very entertaining. I was attacked by Peter David a couple of years ago at the San Diego Con and he was being very vicious. But I laughed. The press used to be behind me a long time ago, but now there seems to be some kind of resistance to giving me any sort of respect or due. There's just something about me that bothers people and I can't put my finger on it."

As to what amount of respect his company in general deserves, Liefeld adds, "You know, there are times when I tell people that [Image Comics was] the best thing and the worst thing that ever happened to the comic book industry.

"Marvel and DC shook the tree because they wanted to wipe out the competition and they had the deep pockets to do it," he says in discourse on how the big fish have gobbled up the little fish. "I don't have the money to offer kickbacks to retailers or extra discount rates. They've put a lot of people under and they've tried to put us under and we've suffered for it. There's been black eyes and bloody noses and broken jaws, but I feel we've taken on the giants and I feel we're beating them for all the right reasons."

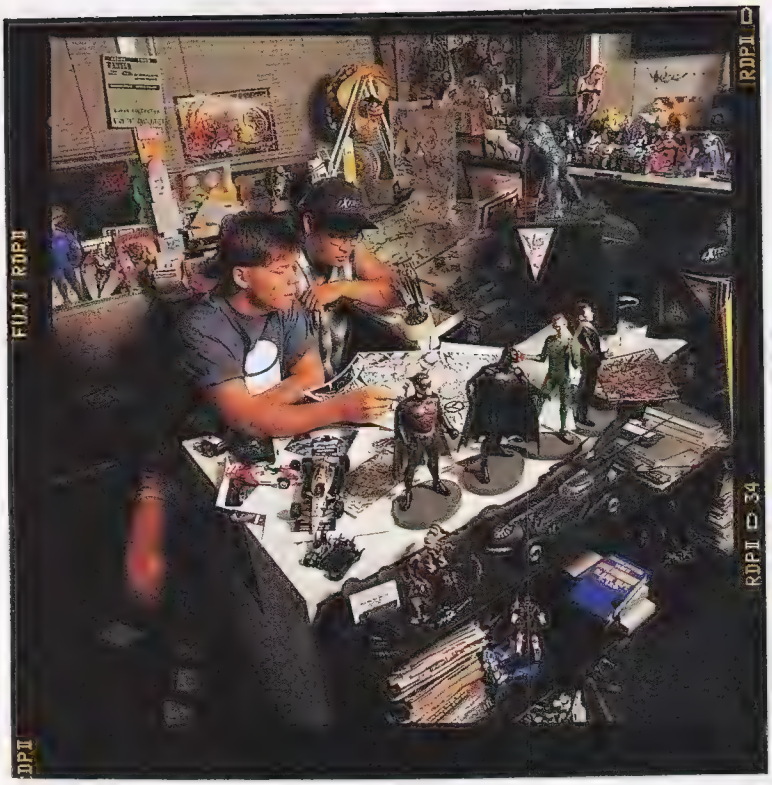
Despite fighting what he perceives as the good fight, Liefeld laughs at the idea that he's anywhere close to being the top dog. "I still consider myself number 2 and I don't think I'll ever be number 1. People are always waiting for the number 1 guy to drop. I want to be number 2, because that's who the people are always betting on."

Liefeld pauses. Contemplating what he just said, he busts out laughing. "Man! This is way too serious! We're taking this way too serious! After all, this is comic books we're talking about."

IT IS LATE AT NIGHT AT EXTREME STUDIOS. Too late for people coming home

and too early for people going to work. The elevator door opens on the ground floor and a bleary-eyed Liefeld saunters off. He nods in the direction of the night security guy. He's familiar with Liefeld's heavy hours, and so he nods and smiles back as Liefeld wanders out into the dark, deserted parking lot where his car stands lone sentry in the Anaheim night.

Liefeld goes over some pages with inker Danny Miki



"Rob likes to work late at night," offers his right-hand man Matt Hawkins. "That's when the strategies and the creative ideas come together."

Despite his hectic pace, the schedule-oriented Liefeld builds time for other things.

"I'm home for dinner two nights a week during the week," notes Liefeld. "My wife knows there are certain times of the week where she will not see me. I have to start off the week strong; otherwise, I'm all messed up. I never take meetings on Monday. Mondays are all to myself. I'm a six-day, 72-hour-a-week kind of guy. But I never work on Sunday. That's the day of rest."

LIEFELD ROLLS IN THE NEXT DAY AROUND NOON. The all-business mask is a little slower to slip on. The kid is hanging around a little longer. Then it's out to his four-wheeled land beast for another trip to Taco Bell.

"I don't think there's any kind of mystique," says Fraga, laughing at the idea that there's any significance to who gets to go to Taco Bell with Rob and who doesn't. "It's like high school. You have your set of friends and the things you do. I get to go to Taco Bell because Rob knows I'm good to go and that I'm not going to be a freak."

Rob's land cruiser takes a small hill, comes down the other side and rounds a corner. He uses the relative distance from the office to announce that he has made a decision on the fate of *New Men*. The book will go on hiatus at the conclusion of its current storyline, be renamed *New Force* and resurface as part of a winter crossover. "It's probably asinine to commit an entire crossover to your weakest book. But I've never liked ending a book, because I don't like starting over at number 1 all the time."

The afternoon meeting regarding those changes appears to go well. There's some obvious tension in the room and the smiles seem tighter than usual. "It's all about communication," Liefeld says after the meeting breaks up. "Whether people resent my decisions or are for them, I want them to know exactly how I arrived at them."

The day's activities are interrupted by a celebrity sighting in the lobby. Rikki Rockett, drummer for the rock group Poison, has arrived for the purpose of schmoozing and mugging for the camera. There's a definite method to this madness, as a photographer drags Liefeld and the rocker around the Image bullpen for a series of not-so-candid candids. Liefeld has agreed to publish Rockett's comic book creation *The Sisters of Mercy* early next year and this is the first groan of the hype machine in motion. Liefeld flashes his pearly whites and actually looks like he's enjoying it. But after a few minutes of casual conversation, he hands Rockett off to an assistant and is once again behind closed doors.

Liefeld's picking up of Rockett's book with a minimum of deliberation, along with his recent purchase of the "Battlestar Galactica" license because he liked the show, and his decision to publish Dan Fraga and Marat Mychaels' work when, according to Hawkins, "everybody thought they sucked," are among the ways he seems to show his daring these days.

"Sometimes I feel like 'Just let me run around in this and let me show you what I can do,' " Liefeld explains. "We make mistakes and we sometimes miscalculate. But when we make a mistake you can be sure of one thing. It's Rob Liefeld's mistake."

Behind closed doors for much of the rest of the day, Liefeld the kid melts away and, in his place, we once again see Liefeld the publisher with one eye on the art and one eye on the reality in action. First there's a meeting with the editor of *Knightmare* to discuss what Liefeld considers the "crude language and the forced sexual innuendo in a book we're trying to market to kids." The next meeting is a little tougher. Liefeld, in his familiar pose sitting on the floor, is talking to an artist who will remain nameless, an artist who did one of the two covers for a recent issue of *Warchild*. Since Liefeld is so tied to that title, it was his cover that ended up on most of the issues, with the artist before him, who is looking slightly crestfallen, having his version end up as the dreaded variant. Liefeld uses kid gloves in explaining why the artist's cover was not the main one. He also spends some time going over the inside art; soliciting his opinion and basically boosting what he perceives to be a sagging ego. The artist, not too much older than Liefeld when he got his first gig, leaves smiling.

"The artist actually did a quite good cover and so I didn't want him to walk away thinking he was being punished," reflects Liefeld after his colleague leaves. "I wanted him to know that I didn't make his the variant cover because I was not happy with his work. In fact, the artist had never even asked me the question. He might have never asked me the question. But just in case

IS LIEFELD BURYING THE HATCHET?

Rob Liefeld, returning temporarily to the Marvel fold to draw what he describes as "this gatefold monstrosity" commemorative cover for the 50th issue of *X-Force*, appears to have buried the hatchet with his former employers. Liefeld claims, however, that there was never a hatchet to bury.

"I certainly don't want to rewrite history, but I never really had a problem with Marvel as a company," he claims. "They tend to lump all the Image people together when it comes to those kind of reports. I've always credited Bob Harras with letting me run crazy and create all these wonderful characters. It just reached a point where the conditions with Marvel were such that I needed to move on. I'm not fingerpointing, but Todd McFarlane and Erik Larsen have always been more vocal about Marvel. I may have bashed a few individuals at the company but I don't believe I ever bashed the company."

The deal for Liefeld to return for *X-Force* variant cover duty was cemented at this year's San Diego Comic Con. "I jumped at the chance. I haven't drawn these characters in a long time, and there were some new X-Force characters that I've never drawn. So it was cool to come back. Real cool." ■ MS

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HARRIS COMICS

EXTREME DESTROYER IS COMING!

Extreme Destroyer, the company's third annual monster crossover extravaganza, begins a nine-part epic that will feature a four-issue *New Force* mini-series and a temporary hiatus and retooling of the New Men.

Extreme Destroyer opens with the revelation that an alien race called The Keep has been secretly seeding the human race with a Nu Gene and harvesting them on a regular basis. It is discovered that Glory, Shaft and the New Men carry this gene and must decide whether to succumb to the presence of The Keep or fight back.

"Over at Marvel they just have mutants; they're born with it," discloses Rob Liefeld. "I decided to take a different look at and have a reason for these characters being the way they are. I've made the big struggle for the New Men in Extreme Destroyer the question of why they would want to serve man when they can serve the gods."

The Extreme Destroyer saga leads into the December beginning of the *New Force* mini-series, which, promises Liefeld, "will introduce a lot of new characters and concepts." Liefeld reports that the *New Men* series will go on a four-month hiatus during the run of the *New Force* mini, "but will resume with its original numbering after the *New Force* series ends."

Liefeld admits that the crossover and mini-series are being done to try to heighten people's awareness of the New Men. "We think we're putting out a damned good book with *New Men*, and crossovers are always helpful. We look forward to these annual events changing these character's lives." ■ MS

never even asked me the question. He might have never asked me the question. But just in case that was going through his head, I wanted to call the meeting and head his doubts off at the pass. I was a freelancer once and I know how paranoid I was. So I can pretty much guess how paranoid he must have been."

ROB LIEFELD HAS ASSUREDLY MADE A NAME FOR HIMSELF IN THE COMIC BOOK INDUSTRY. He has also been a called a few names during his career. Some call him brash and obnoxious, others impulsive—and Liefeld admits that he senses those vibes, even from people at Image.

"I'm definitely resented by people in this studio, and a big reason for that is that I do have my favorites. I won't sit down and have a hamburger with everybody. And I tend to be the most abusive to the people I'm closest to in this company. But I don't threaten people."

"Have I ever come to blows with Rob?" questions Dan Fraga while finishing up a page of *Black Flag* during a late-afternoon drawing burst. "It's come close. There have been times where I know he wishes he could sock me out and there's times where I felt the same way about him. But it's never happened."

Fraga could be classified as one of those special instinct-driven Liefeld projects. A persistent artist who dogged Liefeld until he gave him a shot (as well as a home for a year and a half), Fraga definitely feels a sense of loyalty. "Being friends with Rob does not give me an advantage in this company. In fact, I probably take more abuse than a lot of people here because I am so close to him. But if it came down to staying here and taking a cut in pay or going elsewhere for more money, I would take the cut in pay."

Liefeld's life as a comic book mogul took a slightly different direction when Hollywood came a-calling. It began two years ago when he inked a deal with Steven Spielberg for *Doom's IV* and has picked up steam with Liefeld signing on the bottom line for film treatments of popular characters Prophet and Avengelyne. "Dealing with Hollywood hasn't changed Rob," offers Hawkins. "I mean the second he inked the Spielberg deal, Tom Cruise called and Rob had a meeting with him and it hardly phased him. Because the biggest advantage he has in dealing with Hollywood is that he doesn't really need them. Sure, he's a long-term thinker who sees the movies and licensing as critical to the long-term future of this business. But he does not have to be in any rush because the comics are doing so well."

But Liefeld, following a brief telephone conversation with actor Richard Hatch that is the first step in green-lighting the actor to pen some *Galactica* comic stories, does allow that movies have become a big part of his comic book empire. "Our making movie announcements is not even that big a deal anymore. It's like 'okay' we've sold another one. I've actually become a pretty good dealmaker and it's gotten to the point where putting together a good deal has become just as satisfying as doing a good drawing."

Liefeld, as he is prone to do, quickly jumps back into the reality of the business. He mixes in a few more battle metaphors and hints at some big things happening to the industry itself and Image in particular but stops short of revealing anything concrete. "Things have definitely changed for me in the last year. I've gone through the whole hot artist and hot penciler thing but now, all of a sudden, all of this is not really about Rob Liefeld's career anymore. Up until now it's been my vision that's been carrying all this. Now Image is a place for everybody's vision."

IT IS LATE IN THE DAY. Shannon, at the front desk, is packing her things to go. There is a hum of activity as the computer colorists settle in for the night shift. For some, the Image day is coming to an end. For others, it is just beginning. For Rob Liefeld, sitting alone on the floor of his office, pencil in hand, the hustle continues.

"It's like my 20's have been all about working my ass off," he sighs. "When I get into my 30's I think it's going to be time to step back and reevaluate what I want to do next. But right now I'm in the middle of a 12-year mad rush and I can't see doing anything else but riding it out."

Marc Shapiro, who never sleeps, wrote several articles in this issue—check 'em out.

Liefeld unwinds with a viewing of "Reservoir Dogs"

A SHEPHERD IS COMING...
LIEFELD
AND THE FIGHT FOR FREEDOM BEGINS!

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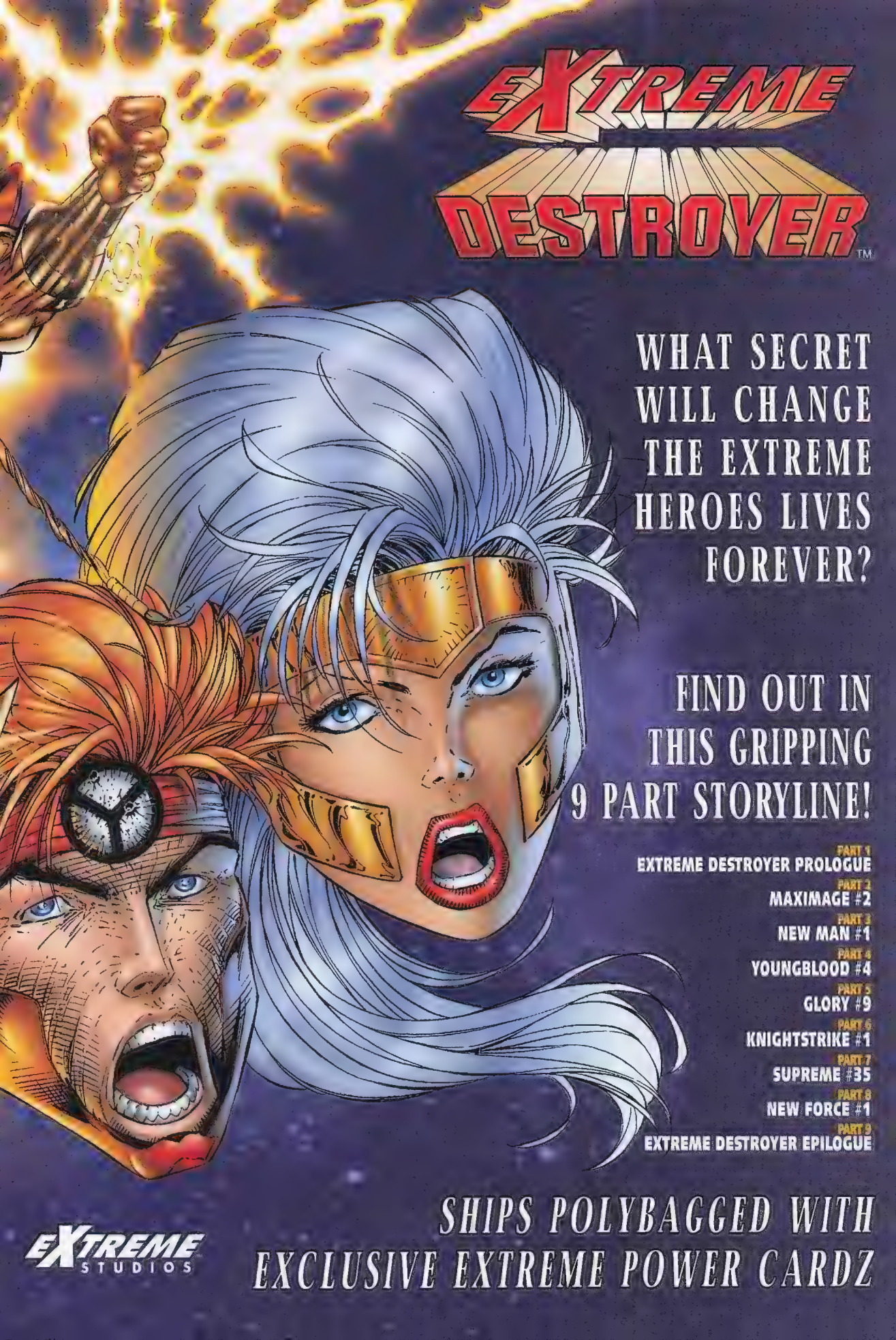
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PART 7
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RAMOS
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X-NATION 2099

A NEW MUTANT TITLE ROCKS MARVEL'S FUTURE WORLD

VITAL STATS

WHO?
Future mutants Clarion, Wulff, Nostromo, Uproar, Willow, December and Twilight

WHAT?
X-Nation 2099, an ongoing monthly title from Marvel's 2099 line of titles by Tom Peyer and Humberto Ramos beginning in January

DEBUT?
X-Nation 2099 #1 shipping in January

WHAT'S THE DEAL?
A group of funky mutants try to survive in the far future, but—as with most mutants—they quickly discover that simply hanging out is a lot tougher than it seems. Especially if you're a mutant.

HUMBERTO RAMOS likes to think of his *X-Nation 2099* characters as his children. But when it came time to give birth, the Mexico City based artist recalls that he did not have a whole lot of time to create the cover you see before you.

"I thought about the cover for about a week," he says, "before I actually sat down to sketch. Then on Sunday night I got a call from Marvel and they said they needed it tomorrow. So I sat down and did a really rough sketch in about six hours."

The result is *X-Nation 2099*, a sharply drawn, detail heavy depiction of the latest lights in the X-Universe: Clarion, Wulff, Nostromo, Uproar, Willow, Twilight and December. *X-Nation 2099*, written by Tom Peyer (*Legion of Super-Heroes*), is scheduled to hit the shops in January. The series takes place in a runaway center for wayward mutants in Halos City where the aforementioned crew have come together to basically hang out and do nothing. But, according to Peyer, "When you're a mutant the world keeps coming after you."

The X-Nation power lineup consists of Clarions' ability to turn sound into force, Nostromo's half-human/half-robot prowess, Wulff's animal senses and fighting skills, Uproar's ability to absorb mass and strength, December's ability to make things cold, Twilight's secret weapon (a red sphere that can change the fabric of reality), and Willow's ability to take on the attributes of another person.

"December is the sexy girl, so I made her immediately attractive," explains Ramos. "I drew Willow with a certain amount of sensitivity and vulnerability. Twilight is special to me because she is a Mexican girl. I felt it was my responsibility to make her not look like a gang girl or the other stereotypes people have of Mexicans."

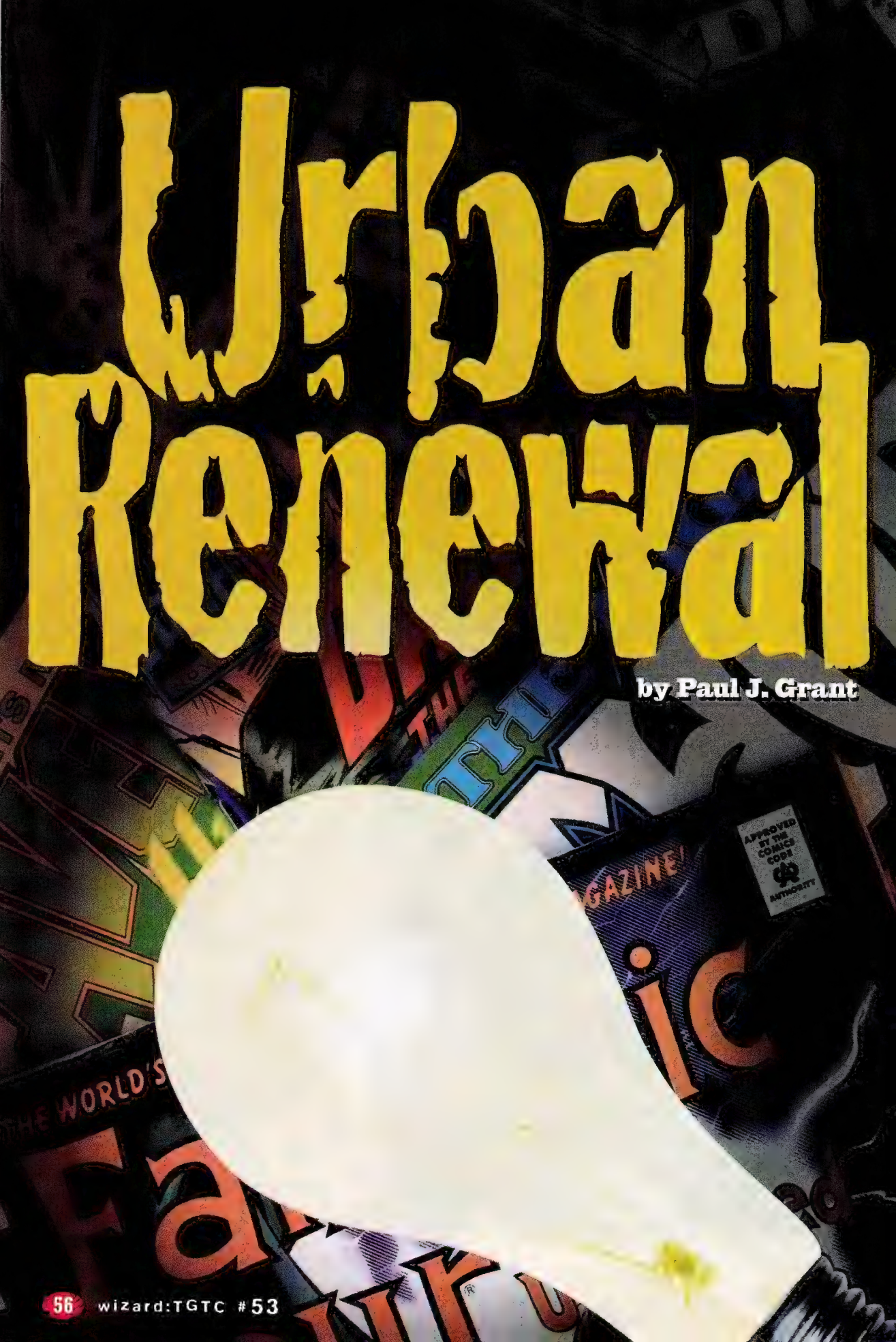
Clarion, Wulff and Nostromo are more "big muscled guys" according to Ramos. The challenge for the artist came in the more unorthodox Uproar. "Uproar is not polite, he's always eating and he sort of looks like a slob from 'Animal House.' Originally, I was going to make him wilder and dirtier looking. But he is an X-Man and X-Men are good guys so I ended up giving him a cleaner look. But it is obvious that he is a little on the fat side."

Marc Shapiro interviewed the Dynamic Duo, Adam West and Burt Ward for this month's "Wizard Profile." Check it out on page 254.

BY MARC SHAPIRO

Urban Renewal

by Paul J. Grant



Marvel gets back to basics and rebuilds the 'House of Ideas'

The House of Ideas is under construction.

While Marvel Comics' flagship titles starring Spider-Man and the X-Men remain strong, sales of Marvel's other titles have mirrored the entire comic industry, taking a downward turn.

So Marvel is getting back to basics, cutting back on volume and emphasizing quality—specifically, the characters and books that have earned the company the nickname, "The House of Ideas."

"We cut back on the market glut," explains Mark Gruenwald who, along with Bobbie Chase, serve as editors-in-chief for the majority of Marvel titles that have come under recent scrutiny. "At our peak, about 120 were on our production schedule in any given month. Now we're doing around 75. We got way too big, way too fast and we're now in a temporary contraction phase. We got rid of all the marginal titles, among them books that had been around for several years—*Warlock and the Infinity Watch*, *Guardians of the Galaxy*. What we're left with are the core books. No matter how bad the market goes, there still seems to be interest in the core characters created by Stan Lee, Jack Kirby and Steve Ditko."

That means that Gruenwald's 1996 lineup will look quite similar to the 1966 Marvel lineup: *The Avengers*, *Captain America*, *Fantastic Four*, *Iron Man* and *Thor* (with *Silver Surfer* added in 1968). And Chase's Marvel Edge books *Daredevil*, *Doctor Strange* and *The Incredible Hulk* also originally date from that era. "We cut away a lot of extraneous material that we were putting out at a time when the market could support it, and that's just not the case anymore," Chase agrees. "I think the cuts made a lot of sense. We got down to manageable family groups and eliminated a lot of redundancies in the line." (See sidebar.)

"Marvel is really in a no-win position," says *Hulk* writer Peter David. "When it expanded the line and capitalized on the success of various titles, people said these were copycat books designed to leech away as much money as possible from the consumer's wallet. When it cancels said books and trims down to a manageable level, people regard it as a sign of weakness. Marvel's responding to what the consumers are saying. On the other hand, it does have characters with proven, time-tested audience appeal, so naturally it makes sense for Marvel to be focusing its energies in that direction."

So the old order changeth. Mark Waid (*Flash*, *Impulse*) signed on to chronicle the adventures of Captain America. Warren Ellis (*Excalibur*, *Ruins*) and then William Messner-Loebs (*Wonder Woman*) agreed to put Thor through the wringer. George Pérez (*UltraForce*) is sending the Silver Surfer where no one has surfed before. J.M. DeMatteis (*Amazing Spider-Man*) is exploring the world of Daredevil from the corners of New York to corners of DD's own mind. And so on.

"I won't denigrate the creative talents who were previously on the books—for one thing I was one of them," Gruenwald, longtime *Captain America* writer, observes wryly. "I'm just going to say that the new people are certainly A-list."

A lot is riding on 1996, as Gruenwald admits, "For at least a year we have to do exemplary stuff and build upon that, and I'm hoping that we can do a few other things, otherwise I'm going to have a pretty slim line."

Word about the books that Gruenwald and Chase are editing is not getting out as easily, since most of the writers have surprises they wish to have remain surprises. However, a few tidbits have been released.

AVENGERS

When X-Men Editor-in-Chief Bob Harras crosses the hall to the Avengers side of Team Marvel, he's a very familiar figure. After all, he's been writing the title since #334 (five years), and is now presiding over a major restructuring of the team, with help from Brazilian artist Mike Deodato Jr. and co-plotter (and *Iron Man* scribe) Terry Kavanagh, in "The Crossing" and "Timeslide." By the time this article sees print, it will be generally known that Tony Stark has been corrupted by Kang and Mantis into committing acts of betrayal and murder, and that the Avengers' timeline is seriously out of whack. The first step for 1996 is to resolve all that, and since discussing what follows that resolution would be giving the game away, Harras is understandably reticent about divulging future storylines.

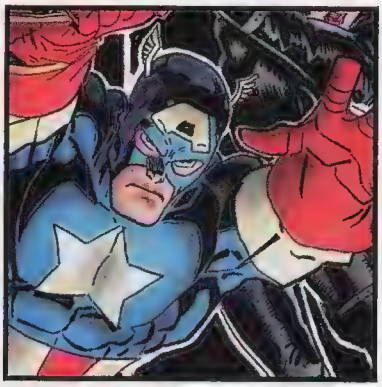
So what does he have planned for the 1996 model *Avengers*?

"I want to remind people that these are very cool characters with complex lives," Harras says. "The game plan is to reach back into their histories and find ripple effects in those histories to show why these characters resonate with each other. With *Force Works* going away [the title will be canceled in January], we can have some sort of repercussions with the Vision, Scarlet Witch and Quicksilver, and get that family feeling between these characters. Some people think of Cap, Iron Man and Thor as the real Avengers, but, maybe because I grew up reading the book in that era, I always felt that the Vision, Scarlet Witch and Quicksilver really had a destiny to be Avengers."

What about interaction between the Avengers and his other charges in the X-Men group? "It's still in the very early planning stages," he reports. "I'm not necessarily talking about a crossover event, but let's just remember that Avengers' mansion is only about 40 miles from the X-Mansion, and Magneto is Scarlet Witch and Quicksilver's father."

CAPTAIN AMERICA

Captain America is one of Marvel's most venerable characters, and every writer—since Stan Lee brought him back in *The Avengers* #4 (1964)—has faced the dilemma of keeping an old character vital. Mark Waid, who follows Mark Gruenwald's 10-year tenure as *Captain America*'s writer, has a game plan. "The first thing you do is strip away a lot of barnacles, and you concentrate on presenting him as a young-ish character," he explains. "We're not going to betray anything that has come before, but I don't want to have him walking around and calling 35-year-old men 'Son.' I hate it when he does that because it makes him seem so old. People think that Cap is 50, but he's really in his late 20s or early 30s."



The other part of Waid's plan, with help from penciler Ron Garney, is to make Cap a contemporary action/adventure hero. "I want to portray Captain America as energetic and cool under fire, and as a real daredevil," he says with enthusiasm. " I want to play down the Living Legend thing and show him more as a living person."

Waid's first story arc found Captain America teaming up with his worst enemy and reluctant savior, the Red Skull. Next on the schedule are a four-part Zodiac crossover which Waid plotted, and in #450 a Hulk appearance. Issue #451 begins the next story arc, regarding which Waid is extremely tight-lipped. "I really can't say that much about it, but it answers the question, 'What's the worst thing you can do to Captain America that's never been done?' When I realized I had an answer to that question, it gave me the confidence to take the assignment in the first place."

How much does Waid think of the character as "Cap" and how much as "America"? Though "Cap" is his answer, Waid doesn't want to ignore the latter. "There have to be ways to do the symbol of America stuff without it being didactic or just bad comics. I have yet to figure out how to do that."

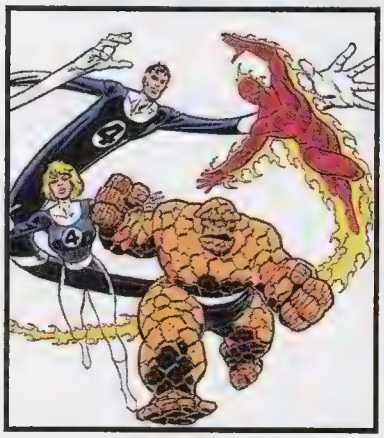
FANTASTIC FOUR

Amid all the changes in creative teams, writer Tom DeFalco and penciler Paul Ryan's continued run on *Fantastic Four* is the exception.

The big news of 1995 was the return of Doctor Doom and Reed Richards, who have been believed dead for two years. What's on tap for the team in 1996? First of all, the team will consist of the original four members—Reed, Sue, Ben and Johnny—but not with the same dynamic.

"Reed is fundamentally changed by his experience," according to DeFalco. "He's not going to be the big-mouth know-it-all that he used to be. He's going to be a lot more humble and insecure. We're going to be exploring his relationship with Sue, and everyone who expects us to have the standard cliché fights about who's going to be running the team is going to be vastly disappointed. Sue is more than happy to surrender leadership, but it's established early on that when they get into a push-comes-to-shove situation, Sue instinctively shouts out the orders. Reed's been living on his own the last year, and his communication skills are not what they should be.

"They're going to have internal problems in terms of what they feel they should be doing for the other person. The kind of arguments that Reed and Sue are going to have will be the kind that all married couples have."



As for the other team members, once again the Thing has regained the ability to become human on a regular basis, but that's not going to quite work out the way he had envisioned. And DeFalco will be dealing with the subplot concerning his scarred face. "He's going to get cured in the most humiliating way possible," DeFalco says. Johnny "Human Torch" Storm and his estranged shape-shifting Skrull wife Lyja (who also poses as one of Johnny's lovers) are going to be caught in a love triangle that actually only involves two people. This puts Lyja in a really bad situa-

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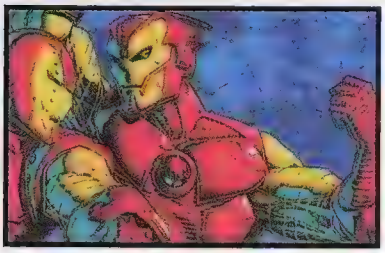
tion because her problem with Johnny is that she often deceives him, and here she is trying to win him back by deceiving him. Obviously, this was not her intention when she started; she just got swept up in posing as Johnny's "wife" Alicia Masters. To make matters worse, Lyja's going to face a real tragedy later on as the Skrulls come back for her because she's a traitor to her race.

IRON MAN

In what has to be the most controversial revamp to date—within the pages of both *Iron Man* and *The Avengers*—the Tony Stark we've all known for years is revealed to be a traitor to the group. "It's not a Life Model Decoy [i.e., an android] or an alternate timeline Tony Stark," protests writer Terry Kavanagh, torpedoing two popular rumors that have been circulating in fandom. "It is our current real time Tony Stark."

The plan for the new Iron Man is based on a time paradox. The Avengers figure that only Tony Stark can defeat Tony Stark, so they use the doorway in the basement of Avengers Mansion to go back in time and retrieve a 19-year-old Stark who has not yet been corrupted by Kang and seduced by Mantis. (For all the answers see *Avengers: Timeslide*, which ships in December.)

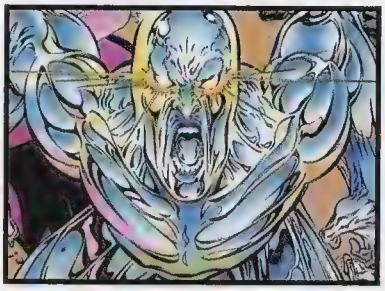


In December's *Iron Man* #325, the 19-year-old Tony faces his older self and the battle ends up with the younger man wearing the armor, and not necessarily because he wants to...but because he *has* to.

In true comic book tradition, Marvel is moving the guideposts timewise again. Kavanagh figures the present-day Tony Stark is around 28 years old for purposes of the story, which means that the 19-year-old version read about Vietnam in history books, not newspapers. His understanding of technology will be that much more advanced as well. "He has the genius, but it will take him some time to catch up," Kavanagh explains. "But if anyone can rise to the occasion, he is capable of it."

SILVER SURFER

Starting with *Silver Surfer* #111, new writer George Pérez took the Surfer out of the Marvel game and, with artist Tom Grindberg, has taken the venerable character to a whole new plane of existence. Pérez felt that massive change was the order of the day. For at least the first year, no Thanos, no Galactus and no Mephisto.



"The universe is so vast and the Surfer seems to run into the same people every time," he says. "So, by using the old tried-and-true wormhole effect, I'm throwing the Surfer into a part of the universe so remote that not even the Watchers have ever been there. If the Surfer were to travel at his highest speed, it would take the birth and death of 10 suns for him to get back. Which is probably longer than his lifespan."

The Surfer's access to the breach is created by creatures from the other side as a desperate call for help which is sent out at random towards cosmic life forms and the Surfer is the only one who gets the signal. This plot device enables Pérez to introduce a whole new cast of characters and new worlds for the Surfer to explore and save from the Uni-Lord, whose influence pervades the entire region. In Uni-Lord's cosmos, mysticism is very common, so the Surfer's powers don't work quite the way he wants them to. He first learns this when he faces the Uni-Lord's Gestapo called the Blackbodies—humanoid-shaped black holes that can suck in the Surfer's blasts and shoot them back at him a thousand-fold.

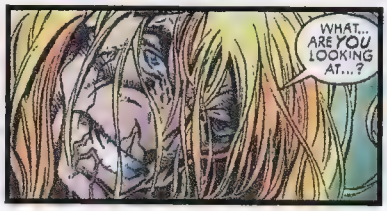
But the Blackbodies don't only take energy. They also take souls. "The soul of Norrin Radd will be taken from the Surfer, which will return him to the sort of original enigmatic Silver Surfer that Lee and Kirby made him before Norrin Radd came in and gave him more personality than he really needed."

Covering all bases, Pérez is also trying to come up with a way to have an alternate Surfer who could still react with the Marvel Universe on the other side. He wants to examine the Surfer's past to determine what made him such a legendary figure in the cosmos in such a comparatively short time. As to just how another Surfer can exist over in the Marvel Universe, it's still too early to tell.

THOR

First there was writer Warren Ellis. In his "Worldengine" saga, Thor stopped Ragnarok, the fabled event destroying the Norse Gods, just in time...or so he thought. New writer William Messner-Loebs (with continuing artist Mike Deodato Jr.) are out to prove him wrong starting with *Thor* #495 in December.

"Unfortunately, although Thor doesn't realize it immediately, a sort of mini-Ragnarok has taken place without anyone on Earth noticing, except for Thor who wakes up and is no longer a god," Loebs reports. He's still six-foot-six, 350 pounds of pure muscle, an excellent athlete, never been sick a day in his life, and a perfect physical specimen. But his super-strength and other superpowers are no longer available to him, and he cannot immediately find out why, since he cannot contact Asgard.



And as for Mjolnir? Well, Thor's sacred hammer will basically be converted to a large twisted tree limb and used as a bludgeon. Much will be revealed to him in issue #500, but not all. "I may be able to borrow a little mystical power from elsewhere in the Marvel Universe to get him there to find stuff out, but on his own he can't get there," says Loeb. "I think that will be, in a certain sense, a relief. He's always loved Earth, and fought with his father Odin over the fact that he preferred being on Earth over being in Asgard."

On Earth, however, Thor has developed an expensive lifestyle and now has to finance that lifestyle. Messner-Loebs' solution? Get him a job as a freelance celebrity bodyguard. Remember, this is the same writer who gave Wonder Woman a job at a taco joint, so Thor's definitely getting the better deal by far. Why does he enjoy bringing the godly down to earth? "I think it all has to do with restoring a sense of scale to characters," he explains. "When these characters have been mighty for so long, and almost omni-powerful, you have to have something that will show what having this power really means, so it's a good idea occasionally to de-power them."

MARVEL EDGE

DAREDEVIL

According to Editor James Felder, when new writer J. M. DeMatteis came on the book they decided the book had gone about as far to the grim-and-gritty side as it could stand. So there will be a concerted effort to make Daredevil a little bit lighter. "Like the old Stan Lee issues," Felder states. After the landmark issue #350, which will feature Stick and the Chaste, look for a return to the

(cont'd on page 65)

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CHECKLIST ART	TOPIC SUBSET
1 Superman vs. Hulk	RIVALRY
2 Captain America	MARVEL HERO
3 Elektra	MARVEL HERO
4 Hulk	MARVEL HERO
5 Jubilee	MARVEL HERO
6 Namor	MARVEL HERO
7 Quicksilver	MARVEL HERO
8 Sabretooth	MARVEL HERO
9 Silver Surfer	MARVEL HERO
10 Silver Surfer vs. Green Lantern	RIVALRY
11 Spider-Man	MARVEL HERO
12 Storm	MARVEL HERO
13 Thor	MARVEL HERO
14 Wolverine	MARVEL HERO
15 Aquaman	DC HERO
16 Azrael	DC HERO
17 Batman	DC HERO
18 Catwoman	DC HERO
19 Shazam vs.Thor	RIVALRY
20 Flash	DC HERO
21 Green Lantern	DC HERO
22 Lobo	DC HERO
23 Robin	DC HERO
24 Shazam	DC HERO
25 Superboy	DC HERO
26 Superman	DC HERO
27 Wonder Woman	DC HERO
28 Quicksilver vs. Flash	RIVALRY
29 Abomination	MARVEL VILLAIN
30 Bullseye	MARVEL VILLAIN
31 Doctor Doom	MARVEL VILLAIN
32 Galactus	MARVEL VILLAIN
33 Green Goblin	MARVEL VILLAIN
34 Juggernaut	MARVEL VILLAIN
35 Kingpin	MARVEL VILLAIN
36 Lizard	MARVEL VILLAIN
37 Wonder Woman vs. Storm	RIVALRY
38 Magneto	MARVEL VILLAIN
39 Thanos	MARVEL VILLAIN
40 Bane	DC VILLAIN
41 Black Adam	DC VILLAIN
42 Circe	DC VILLAIN
43 Darkseid	DC VILLAIN
44 Dr. Polaris	DC VILLAIN
45 Joker	DC VILLAIN
46 Aquaman vs. Namor	RIVALRY
47 Kadabra	DC VILLAIN
48 Killer Croc	DC VILLAIN
49 Lex Luthor	DC VILLAIN
50 Penguin	DC VILLAIN
51 Archangel vs. Hawkman	HERO VS. HERO
52 Azrael vs. Sabretooth	HERO VS. HERO
53 Black Canary vs. Black Widow	HERO VS. HERO
54 Blue Beetle vs. Spider Woman	HERO VS. HERO
55 Wolverine vs. Lobo	RIVALRY
56 Shazamvs. Captain Marvel	HERO VS. HERO
57 Cable vs. Captain Atom	HERO VS. HERO
58 Deathstroke vs. Punisher	HERO VS. HERO
59 Ghost Rider vs.Demon	HERO VS. HERO
60 Nightwing vs. Gambit	HERO VS. HERO
61 Human Torch vs. Firestorm	HERO VS. HERO
62 Steel vs. Iron Man	HERO VS. HERO
63 Hawkeye vs. Green Arrow	HERO VS. HERO
64 Jubilee vs. Robin	RIVALRY
65 Venom vs. Lobo	HERO VS. HERO
66 The Ray vs. Nova	HERO VS. HERO
67 Thor vs. Wonder Woman	HERO VS. HERO
68 Warrior vs. War Machine	HERO VS. HERO
69 Captain America vs. Bane	HERO VS. VILLAIN
70 Batman vs. Bullseye	HERO VS. VILLAIN
71 Black Lightning vs. Electro	HERO VS. VILLAIN
72 Daredevil vs. Riddler	HERO VS. VILLAIN
73 Spider-Man vs. Superboy	RIVALRY
74 Green Lantern vs. Green Goblin	HERO VS. VILLAIN
75 Deathstroke vs. Jigsaw	HERO VS. VILLAIN
76 Hulk vs. Killer Croc	HERO VS. VILLAIN
77 Shazam vs. Doctor Doom	HERO VS. VILLAIN
78 Spider-Man vs. Joker	HERO VS. VILLAIN
79 Spectre vs. Galactus	HERO VS. VILLAIN
80 Superman vs. Juggernaut	HERO VS. VILLAIN
81 Steel vs. Absorbing Man	HERO VS. VILLAIN
82 Catwoman vs. Elektra	RIVALRY
83 Thing vs. Solomon Grundy	HERO VS. VILLAIN
84 Killer Croc vs. Abomination	VILLAIN VS. VILLAIN
85 Arcade vs. Riddler	VILLAIN VS. VILLAIN
86 Black Adam vs. Mandarin	VILLAIN VS. VILLAIN
87 Bullseye vs. Deadshot	VILLAIN VS. VILLAIN
88 Poison Ivy vs. Black Cat	VILLAIN VS. VILLAIN
89 Enchantress vs. Circe	VILLAIN VS. VILLAIN
90 Dr. Polaris vs. Magneto	VILLAIN VS. VILLAIN
91 Captain America vs. Batman	RIVALRY
92 Darkseid vs. Thanos	VILLAIN VS. VILLAIN
93 Doctor Doom vs. Cyborg	VILLAIN VS. VILLAIN
94 Two-Face vs. Jigsaw	VILLAIN VS. VILLAIN
95 Green Goblin vs. Joker	VILLAIN VS. VILLAIN
96 Man-Bat vs. Lizard	VILLAIN VS. VILLAIN
97 Kingpin vs. Lex Luthor	VILLAIN VS. VILLAIN
98 Scarecrow vs. Scarecrow	VILLAIN VS. VILLAIN
99 Mole Man vs. Penguin	VILLAIN VS. VILLAIN
100 Checklist	CHECKLIST
1 of 18 Avengers vs. JLA- Thor	IMPACT (embossed)
2 of 18 Avengers vs. JLA- Hawkeye	IMPACT (embossed)
3 of 18 Avengers vs. JLA- Iron Man	IMPACT (embossed)
4 of 18 Avengers vs. JLA- Quicksilver	IMPACT (embossed)
5 of 18 Avengers vs. JLA- Wonder Woman vs. Black Widow	IMPACT (embossed)
6 of 18 Avengers vs. JLA-Flash	IMPACT (embossed)
7 of 18 Avengers vs. JLA-Hawkman	IMPACT (embossed)
8 of 18 Avengers vs. JLA-Metamorpho	IMPACT (embossed)
9 of 18 Avengers vs. JLA-Crimson Fox	IMPACT (embossed)
10 of 18 Titans vs. X-Men-The Atom	IMPACT (embossed)
11 of 18 Titans vs. X-Men-Impulse	IMPACT (embossed)
12 of 18 Titans vs. X-Men-Supergirl	IMPACT (embossed)
13 of 18 Titans vs. X-Men-Split	IMPACT (embossed)
14 of 18 Titans vs. X-Men- Cyclops vs. Nightwing	IMPACT (embossed)
15 of 18 Titans vs. X-Men- Beast	IMPACT (embossed)
16 of 18 Titans vs. X-Men- Gambit	IMPACT (embossed)
17 of 18 Titans vs. X-Men- Rogue	IMPACT (embossed)
18 of 18 Titans vs. X-Men- Wolverine	IMPACT (embossed)
1 of 12 Sabretooth vs. Azrael	HOLO F/X
2 of 12 Aquaman vs. Namor	HOLO F/X
3 of 12 Captain America vs. Bane	HOLO F/X
4 of 12 Catwoman vs. Elektra	HOLO F/X
5 of 12 Quicksilver vs. Flash	HOLO F/X
6 of 12 Superman vs. Hulk	HOLO F/X
7 of 12 Silver Surfer vs. Green Lantern	HOLO F/X
8 of 12 Robin vs. Jubilee	HOLO F/X
9 of 12 Wolverine vs. Lobo	HOLO F/X
10 of 12 Shazam vs. Thor	HOLO F/X
11 of 12 Spider-Man vs. Superboy	HOLO F/X
12 of 12 Wonder Woman vs. Storm	HOLO F/X
1 of 2 Superboy / Spider-Man / Spider-Boy	MIRAGE (lenticular)
2 of 2 Wolverine / Batman / Dark Claw	MIRAGE (lenticular)

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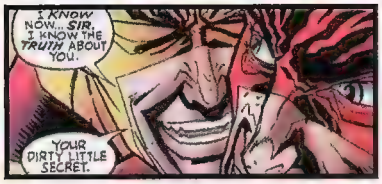

earliest days of the book. Matt Murdock will return and be involved once again with former law partner Foggy Nelson and former heartthrob Karen Page. He'll even be wearing the yellow and red costume for a while.

Summer 1996 will probably see a gang war story. The various organized crime factions will be fighting over turf in the power vacuum left by the fall of the Kingpin, who has since returned but is a long way from his former status. And look for stories set in the Himalayas involving Doctor Strange, the Ancient One, Iron Fist and Elektra.

Will Matt practice law again? The team has not yet worked out all the details, but it's leaning in that direction. According to Felder, "The strength of the character is in that dichotomy, the way Stan set up the character as blind and an attorney, and justice is blind. To ignore that isn't doing the book a service."

DOCTOR STRANGE

Besides turning Daredevil's life around, writer J.M. DeMatteis is now working his magic with the Sorcerer Supreme on a monthly basis. Dr. Strange—who no longer relies on his mystical magic of old, but Catastrophe Magic based on the alignment of the planets—will be heading back to his roots. Issue #84, which shipped in October, began Strange's long journey in search of his magic and himself.

DeMatteis has previously stated, "What they tossed up 20 years ago was an amazing story. Dr. Strange was a rich doctor who lost it all. What turned him into this selfish, arrogant alcoholic? At the same time, what was there in this man that allowed Dr. Strange to open up to the Ancient One as his spiritual master and lead him into a new path?"

Besides delving into Strange's early psychosis, DeMatteis has also said that readers will get an early look at the Doctor's fiendish foe Baron Mordo. They'll learn just what it was like for Mordo—previously the first disciple of the Ancient One—to have this snobbish surgeon from the West, come and grab the esteemed title out from under him.

"We're going *all* the way back," DeMatteis had stated. "We're going back to Dr. Strange's childhood, to see how it all began."

THE INCREDIBLE HULK

Peter David has written over 100 issues of *The Incredible Hulk*, and may write 100 more, but he ain't talking details at this point. The "Ghosts of the Future" storyline is already in high gear (with new artist Angel Medina), and after that? Editor Bobbie Chase promises an exciting new direction, but states that she'd be giving everything in "Ghosts of the Future" away if she got any more specific.

David plays his cards just as close to the vest. "Let's just say that there will be a retrenching, in terms of the Hulk's personality, and the way that he's going to be perceiving the world around him. He's going to be acquiring a new sidekick, someone we've seen before, and we're going to endeavor to recapture some of the mysteriousness of the Hulk that pervaded those early issues.

The Hulk was an unknown quantity back then. His essential character changed about four times over the course of six issues. You literally never knew what was going on with this guy. And the prophecy that all he holds dear will be taken from him? It's going to come true."

So goes the early stages of the House of Ideas' renovation. And it's a credit to these time-honored characters, most of whom are as classic as they get. Gruenwald himself believes there's life in these venerable heroes yet. "Unlike certain other companies with classic characters, ours are still the original ones," he says. "Not revised. Not revamped with continuity implants. If anyone was ever a fan of these characters, I think they're going to see that we're doing bold new things with them that remain true to the core of the characters as they've traditionally been done."

Paul Grant hid his murder weapon in the foundation of the "House of Ideas." (Ruth Morrison also contributed to this story.)

WHO'S IN & WHO'S OUT?

IN: *Thor*	**OUT:** *Thunderstrike*
IN: *Iron Man*	**OUT:** *War Machine*
IN: *Captain America*	**OUT:** *U.S.Agent*
IN: *The Avengers*	**OUT:** *Force Works*
IN: *Ghost Rider*	**OUT:** *Blaze, Blade*
IN: *Doctor Strange*	**OUT:** *Hellstorm, Druid*
IN: *Fantastic Four*	**OUT:** *Fantastic Force*
IN: *Punisher*	**OUT:** *Punisher War Journal, Punisher War Zone*
IN: *Silver Surfer*	**OUT:** *Warlock and the Infinity Watch, Guardians of the Galaxy, Quasar*

The Love Letter Contest!

Whoa, Nellie! Did you see what happened in *X-Men* #45? Rogue and Gambit, those two X-Persons who were looking like a couple of potential lovebirds, kind of split up. But we think there's still a chance they could get back together. If only they could express their true feelings for each other. Like maybe in a love letter...

This contest is sponsored by Marvel Comics, a bunch of lovey-dovey guys and gals.

Wait a minute, Mr. Postman!

Ah, you know mutants. Never too good at letting their feelings out. So maybe you should jump in and actually write a letter for one of them.

There's two ways you can do it. You can get into the role of Gambit and pen a little sweet note to Rogue, or you can pretend you're the mysterious Southern belle and write a letter to the kind-hearted Remy.
But you've got to say it like you mean it! Use their lingo. Reflect on their backgrounds. Heck, you might even want to send along a little token of your affection to sweeten the pot. Make us misty-eyed with your X-pressive missive and you could win these…

Lovely Prizes!

Grand Prize (2): Hey! There's going to be one big winner in each of two categories: Rogue to Gambit and Gambit to Rogue. One winner in each category will receive an Andy Kubert original sketch of themselves getting a big ol' friendly, lovin' hug from the object of their affection, either Rogue or Gambit. They'll also receive a copy of *X-Men* #45 autographed by Andy Kubert *and* a beautiful Marvel Press Rogue/Gambit poster autographed by artist Dennis Calero.

Second Prize (20): Ten winners in each category (Rogue to Gambit, Gambit to Rogue) will receive a copy of *X-Men* #45 autographed by Andy Kubert and a Marvel Press Rogue/Gambit poster autographed by Dennis Calero. Now ain't that sweet?

Fill this out this entry form, attach it to your letter, put it in an envelope: (make sure you address the envelope correctly), and send it all to:

Love Letter to Rogue
c/o Wizard Press
P.O. Box 118
Congers, NY 10920-0118

or

Love Letter to Gambit
c/o Wizard Press
P.O. Box 118
Congers, NY 10920-0118.

Love that legal text!

No purchase necessary. Contest is open to anyone except employees of Wizard Press, Marvel Comics and their immediate families or Chuck Woolery. "Love Connection," my ass. Print your name, date of birth, address, city, state, zip and telephone number with area code on the official entry form or a 3-by-5 inch index card and attach the form or card to your entry. Enter as many times as you like. Mail each entry separately to: Love Letter to Rogue, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118, or Love Letter to Gambit, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118. **All incorrectly addressed entries will be disqualified.** No mechanical reproductions of completed forms are accepted, but you can photocopy the entry form before filling it out if you don't want to mess up your magazine. All entries become property of Wizard Press and none will be returned. All taxes (federal, state and local, if any) will be the responsibility of the prize winners. No cash equivalent or substitute prizes will be offered. Prizes are awarded in the names of contest winners and are not transferable. Offer void where prohibited, regulated or restricted by law in a manner inconsistent with the purposes and rules hereof. We figured we couldn't do an entire "Hyper-Love Issue," so we're just going to do a Hyper-Love contest. Call us sentimental. **All entries must be received at contest headquarters by January 31, 1996.** Wizard Press is not responsible for lost, late, misdirected or mutilated entries. Odds of winning will be determined by the number of valid entries received prior to the closing date of the contest. Prize winners will be selected based on originality, quality and creativity from all properly completed entries by Wizard Press. Judging will take place on February 14, 1996—Valentine's Day!

For a list of winners, available after February 14, 1996, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to: Rogue/Gambit Love Letter Winners, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118.

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Official Love Letter Entry Form

DEADLINE IS JANUARY 31, 1996!
So get romantic fast!

Name _____ Date of Birth _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone Number (with area code) _____

Flowers or chocolates? _____

stan
THE WIZARD INTERVIEW

lee

STAN LEE has a tough time putting his finger on things. Never mind that the man has such a gift for nailing characterization that he built not only the Marvel Universe, but a good part of pop culture consciousness as well. For all the legendary artists he's collaborated with over the decades, he hesitates in pinning down who, without question, was the greatest. And while fans restlessly wonder what's causing the holdup on Marvel's vaunted movie projects, Lee insists that if there's one thing he's learned since relocating to Hollywood 15 years ago, it's that these problems can't be pinpointed so tangibly. Prodding Marvel's founding father to dish about his company or even the larger industry picture is like firing bullets at Quicksilver.

To Lee's credit, though, this kind-word-for-all approach—not to mention his formidable imagination—has made him a survivor, someone who's able to speak at alternate moments about his work with Jack Kirby and director James Cameron, or John Buscema and tongue-wagging rocker Gene Simmons of KISS.

A planned KISS one-shot is one of the projects currently filling Lee's plate, along with the imminent launch of his four-title Excelsior imprint, a stand-alone superhero line for Marvel which he'll publish from his Los Angeles office. Ever a master of the promotional tease, he's maddeningly short on details about the new line, alluding even more vaguely to another effort called *Riftworld* and an ultra-secret fifth Excelsior entry he has gleefully tagged "Project Gump." (In other words, True Believers, the next $300 million blockbuster that no one can see coming.)

On a September afternoon spent boning up on Marvel's absorption of Malibu and gearing up for a trip to New York to plug his cameo in the slacker flick "Mallrats," comics' defining figure sat down with *Wizard* to give the definitive comics interview.

by tom russo

PHOTO BY JOHN R. RATZ

WIZARD: In a "Cut & Print" item on "Mall-rats" a little while back [*Wizard* #48, page 72], you mentioned that you had acted in the Work Projects Administration's federal theater program when you were young. Fill us in on what else you were doing before you established yourself in comics.

STAN LEE: Well, I started working when I was about 15. I was still in high school and I took a part-time job delivering sandwiches for a drug store in New York. And man, I ran. Every delivery I ran as fast as I could. All the other delivery boys there would walk kind of slowly, and they'd say to me, "What are you knocking yourself out for?" And I'd say, "I'M GETTING TIPS!" I thought, "These guys are idiots. By me running, I'll make twice as many deliveries as they do and get twice as many tips." And I've never stopped running.

Where exactly were you running to next?

Oh, I had a lot of other jobs. When I was 16, I was an usher at a big Broadway movie theater called the Rivoli. Now in those days, being an usher was like being a West Point cadet. They had inspection when you reported to work in the morning to make sure that your uniform was pressed and you were standing up straight. One day we found out that Eleanor Roosevelt was coming to the theater, and sure enough, she came down my aisle. I was so proud. I was leading the President's wife, so I walked as erect as I could, looking straight ahead with my chin held high. But some louse had his foot stuck in the aisle and I fell right on my face. The next thing I know, Mrs. President has her hands on my shoulders and she's saying, "Can I help you, young man?"

Ouch.

Anyway, then I saw an ad in the paper: ASSISTANT WANTED IN A PUBLISHING COMPANY.

And that ad was for Timely Comics, which eventually became Marvel.

Right. And I must have been the only one who answered the ad, because I got the job. I didn't even know it was a comic book publisher, but I figured, "I'll take the job, get some experience and move on." I've been here ever since. And that's the story of my life [*smiles*].

But weren't you somehow related to Martin Goodman, the guy who founded Timely?

I had a cousin, and Martin Goodman was my cousin's husband. That was the close relation [*chuckles*]. We hardly knew each other.

This was happening around World War II. When did you serve in the army?

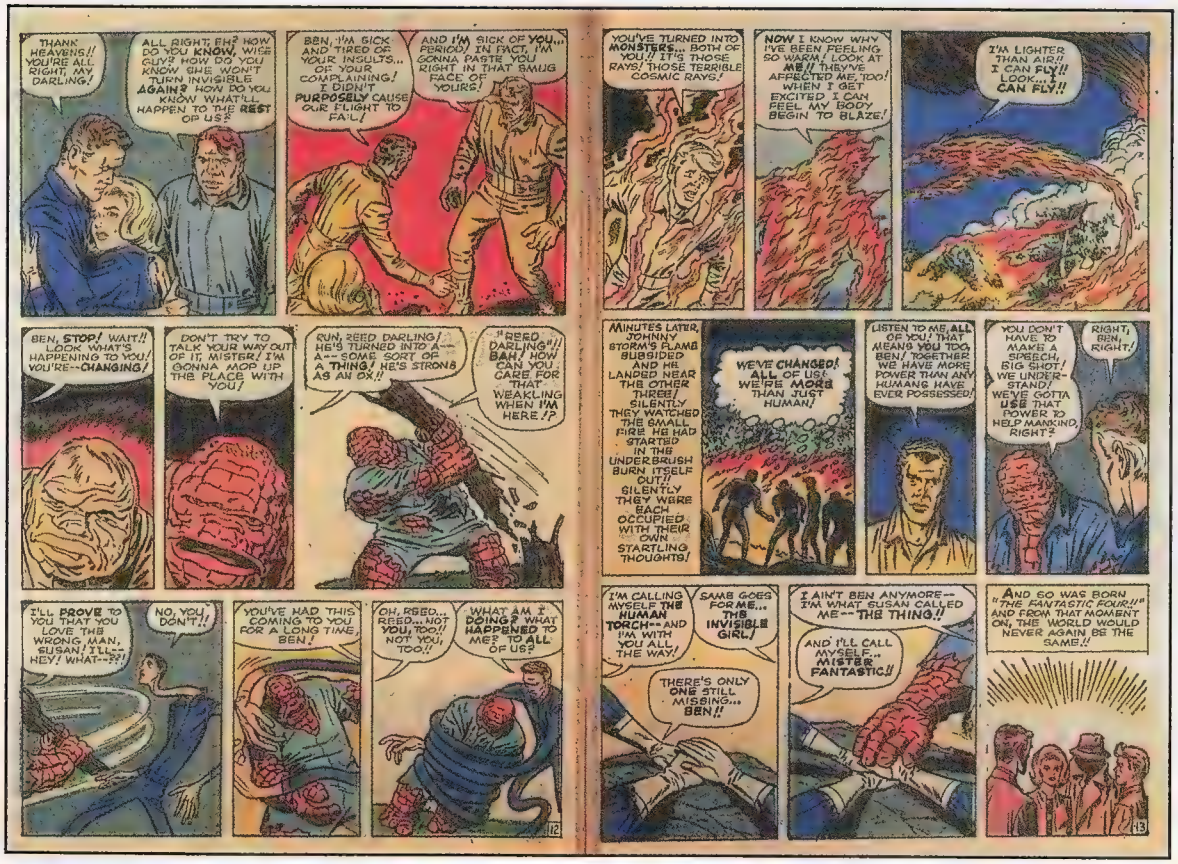
I enlisted in the army when I was about 18, so I guess I had been working for Martin a little more than a year. And I was supposed to go overseas, but somebody found out that I had worked in comics, so they pulled me out of that unit and sent me to Astoria, Queens, where the army had a movie division. I was there to write training films and instructional manuals, but I also drew a cartoon that I think was one of the most famous of World War II. I was asked to do a poster to warn soldiers to go to a prophylactic station for treatment if they had been naughty with a girl. Now, how do you do that in one poster?

Or any poster!

Well, I drew a cartoon of a soldier walking into a "pro" station smiling very proudly, and I had a little dialogue balloon over his head saying, "VD? Not me!" They must have distributed 200 trillion of those things. I won the war single-handedly [*laughs*].

Not exactly Sgt. Fury. But anyway, back on the home front, how big a company was Timely at that point?

Oh, tiny, tiny. When I got there, it was Joe Simon and Jack Kirby. Jack was the artist and Joe was the editor. And since Timely didn't really have much of a staff other than Joe and



Jack, Martin Goodman would buy additional material from an art service called Funnies, Inc. Martin originally bought the Human Torch and the Sub-Mariner from Funnies.

Did you get ahead fairly quickly once you were hired?

I was young and inexperienced at publishing, so in the beginning I just ran errands for Joe and Jack. But yes, I got into the creative end very quickly. They would have me proofread things, and I'd say to myself, "Jeez, I can write these stories as well as other people." So after a while they had me write some stuff, and that was it—I became a writer. Then, not long after I got there, Joe and Jack left, and Martin needed somebody to replace Joe as editor. At that time I was about 17, but I was just about the only guy there. So Martin said, "Do you think you can hold down the editor's job while I look for a grown-up?" When you're 17, what do you know? So I said, "Sure," and I became the editor. Apparently Martin never found anybody else, because I stayed in the job until I went into the army, and then I came back and worked as editor, art director, and head writer until I was made publisher in 1972.

"Fanboy" has become a pretty popular term of late in this business. Is a fanboy essentially what you were all those years ago, or was there a different kind of enthusiasm for comics back then?

You know something, I don't think it was any different than now. Most of the people in the field today are in it because they're fans, and it was the same thing then. I was a big fan of Jack's. I *loved Captain America*—when I bought an issue for the first time, I couldn't believe it, it was so head and shoulders above anything else. And Joe and Jack had done that book, so when I came to work for them, I was very, very impressed. They were my gods.

Do you find that a lot of people don't know your real name used to be Stanley Lieber?

Well, I've been Stan Lee for so long...but yes, my name was Stanley Martin Lieber. Lovely name. Poetic! But when I started writing comics, I thought someday I'd write the Great American Novel, and I wanted to save Stanley Martin Lieber for that. So I just cut my first name in half and thought, "I'll use that for comics, because it's just a temporary job. I'll work here for a year and then get a real job." But then I stayed, and more and more people came to know me as Stan Lee. Which is such a silly name—when people who don't know me ask my name and I say, "Stan Lee," they always say, "Stanley what?"

Yes, that must be interesting. It's been written that in the '50s, as the business stumbled around trying to find an identity, you were set to get out of comics altogether.

I was working for Martin Goodman all those years, and he was great, he knew his business, but he thought of comics as a medium for very young people. And I was really tired of writing simplistic stories with words of no more than two syllables. Finally, in 1960, I said to my wife, "Joan, I want to quit." She said, "You know, Stan, you're always saying you'd like to write different kinds of stories. Why don't you just go ahead and do a book the way you want to? The worst that can happen is that Martin will fire you. And you want to quit anyway, so what are you losing?" That's when we started the so-called Marvel Universe—all on account of my wife.

Where were you coming up with the inspiration for these characters?

I have no idea where the ideas [came] from. If I think about it, I could probably trace a few.

Well, how about the X-Men?

That was easy. At the time I did the X-Men, I had run out of ways that characters could get their superpowers. Spider-Man was bitten by a radioactive spider, the Fantastic Four had been hit by cosmic rays, Thor just happened to be a god... So I said, "I'll make it easy for myself—what if people are just born that way? What if they're mutants?" That's nothing, though. That's just the idea. The important thing is coming up with characters the readers will care about. You can read the greatest story in the world, but if you're not interested in the characters, the story won't mean anything to you. And to me, creating characters is the most fun you can have, even more so than writing. I really don't like to write, which is why I'm such a fast writer—the faster I can do it, the sooner I get finished and can stop. That's probably one reason I've stuck with comics so long. I've had a lot of offers to write books and screenplays, but the thought of writing something that you have to spend days and weeks with is scary to me. You do comics in one day and then you're finished. Of course, the next day you have to start another comic book, but still, no project lasts more than a day or so.

Where did your trademark saying of "Excelsior!" come from?

I love using expressions. The first one I used a lot was "'nuff said." But then I noticed that competing magazines were saying "'nuff said" too, so I figured, "Screw that, I'll come up with another expression." But no matter what I came up with, I saw the same thing cropping up in other magazines. That's why I finally used "Excelsior"—I figured no one else would use it because they wouldn't even know what the hell the word means. In Old English, back in King Arthur's day, it meant "onward and upward."

OK, brace yourself. It's time for the dreaded name association game.

Oh, I'm terrible at this, but all right.

Jack Kirby.

The master.

Steve Ditko.

The most unique genius.

John Romita, Sr.

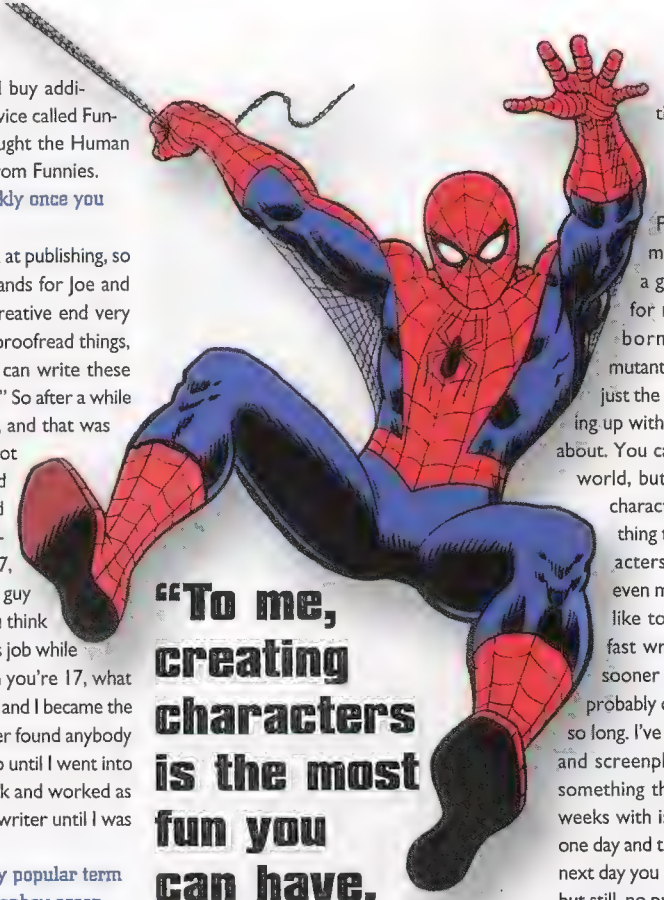
The best there is.

John Buscema.

The Michelangelo of comicdom. He doesn't have a flashy style, so he doesn't have the fan following that some other people do, but he can draw anything, and he can draw it better than anyone else.

Come on now, Stan—commit. Of all the artists you've worked with, who's your favorite? Is it Buscema?

Oh, I've worked with too many. There was Steranko. There was Barry Windsor-Smith. Then there was Gil Kane, Ross Andru, Joe Sin-

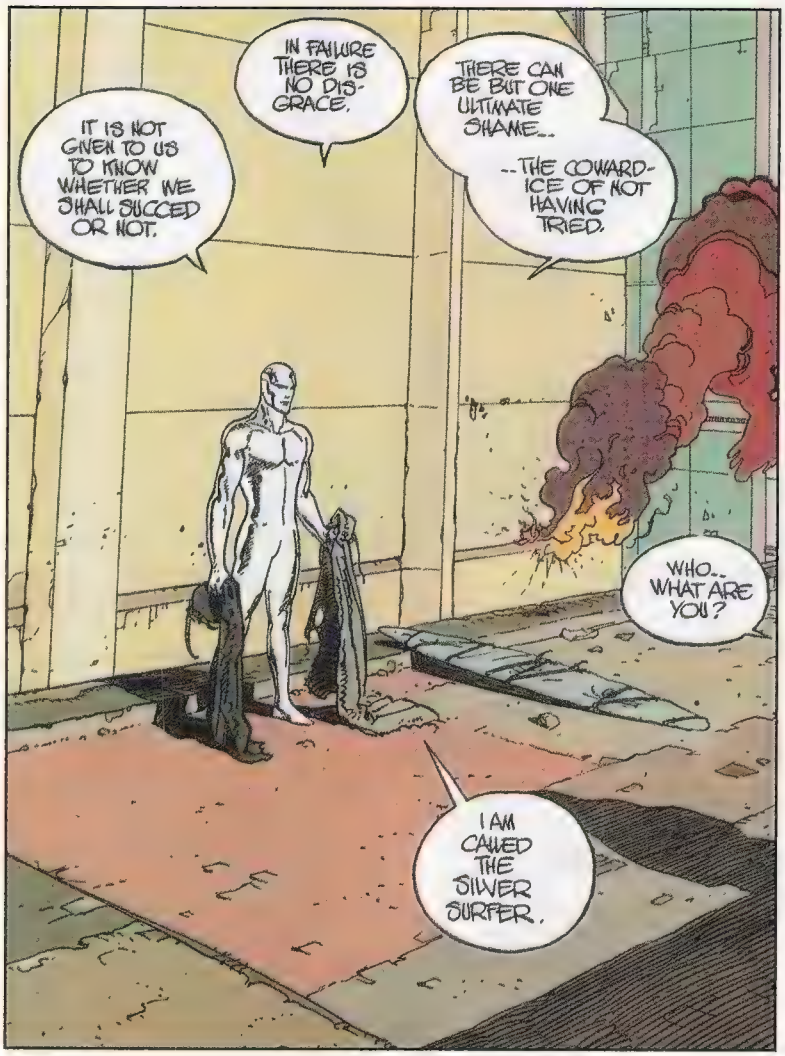


"To me, creating characters is the most fun you can have, even more so than writing."
—Stan Lee

Opposite top: Stan "The Man" back in the old days.

Opposite left: It was the characterization of the heroes that set Lee and Kirby's creations apart from the books of the time. The Fantastic Four was one of the first to be driven by the personalities of the heroes, not just the plots. Art from *Fantastic Four* #1.

Above: The Amazing Spider-Man. 'Nuff said.



Left: The philosophizing, high-talking Surfer was tailor-made for Lee's dialogue. Art by Moebius.

nott... [*Several minutes later, with the meter still running, he finally says...*] You've got to add that there were so many names that we didn't have room. Because I know I'm forgetting some people who would be offended that I didn't mention them.

OK. But now you have to be able to tell us who your favorite character is.

I'd have to say my *two* favorite characters are Spider-Man and the Silver Surfer. Spider-Man because he's become so famous and he and I are so closely identified with each other. And the Silver Surfer because I always enjoyed being able to have him say all those things that really expressed a lot of my philosophy.

Word is that when the original Silver Surfer title was canceled in 1970, it was because Martin Goodman was saying, "Let's change the character. Lose the philosophizing."

Yes, and I'd rather have dropped the book, which I did. But I've always been lucky with the Surfer. Kirby created [him] and did a magnificent job, then Buscema came along and did a fantastic job, and then I did the book with Moebius, and I thought he was brilliant. Yeah, I'm very proud of the Surfer. In fact, I would have preferred it if nobody had ever written the character again except me. But after a while, Marvel decided to bring the Surfer back. I didn't have the time to write it, and it really wouldn't have been fair of me to make a big issue and say, "No, no, don't do it at all," so we went ahead. But at least I know I wrote all of the early ones. To me, that's the quintessential Silver Surfer.

Speaking of those early stories, it seems like it's become more and more fashionable since Jack Kirby died to say that maybe you get too much credit for your work together and that Kirby doesn't get enough.

[*Speaking in a soft, somber voice*] It may be true. Jack deserved a lot of credit. I don't think these stories would have been as successful if Jack hadn't worked on them. I was inspired to a great extent by the art. When he did a story, there were always things that he would add to it that we didn't discuss. I have never tried to take that away from him. As far as whether I got too much credit, who knows? The words that you read in all the stories were mine. I'd say, "Jack, I want you to do a character called the Hulk, and this is the kind of character I want it to be." And so forth, with all the books.

Now, after we got started, Jack made great contributions to the plots. And after a while, some of the plots were Jack's. I mean, he would just bring me many of them, and it didn't matter to me—he was so good at it, it made it more fun for me to write. I always thought we had a wonderful working relationship.

What happened when Kirby left for DC, though? There's always been speculation about the arguments that must have led up to that. Were they passionate or subdued or. .

Jack and I never in our lives had an argument. Jack just decided one day that he wanted to go to DC. I felt terrible about it. But nobody was a slave at Marvel—they didn't have to stay. I wanted Jack—and I told him this, but he never wanted to do it—to be my partner. I wanted to make him the art director, and have the two of us run the company together. But he had every right to go to DC. And he had every right to come back to us for a time. That's the way the business works. Probably one of the few people who's ever stayed at the same company all his life is me.

How would you define your role at Marvel today?

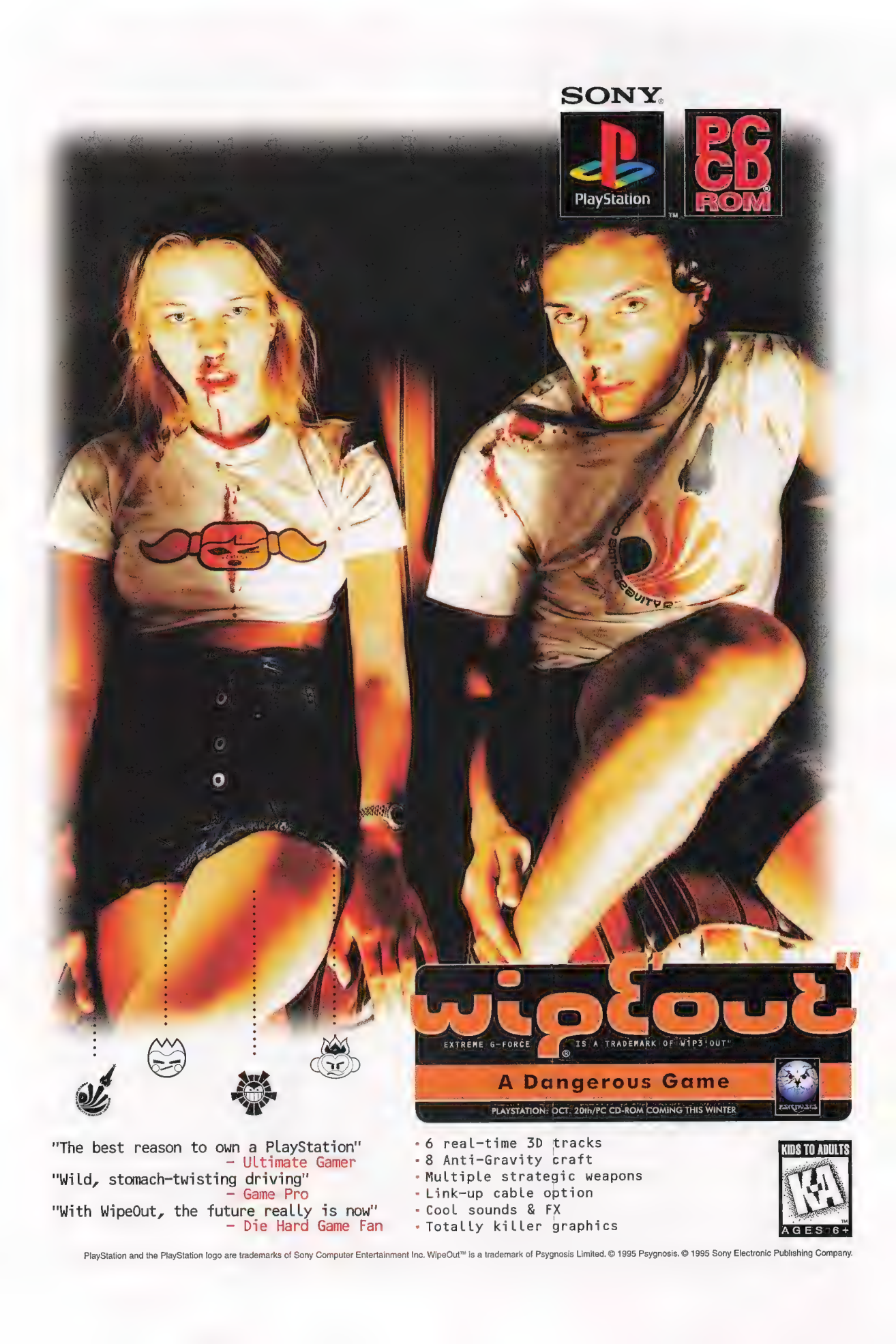
At Marvel Comics, I'm still publisher and chairman, but it's an honorary title more than anything. I've always felt that if you don't have responsibility, you shouldn't try to exert authority. If things go badly at Marvel Comics, I'm not going to get the blame, and therefore, it isn't fair for me to try to tell them what to do or how to do it. So I just serve in an advisory capacity and try to help them as much as I can. At Marvel Films, I'm the co-executive producer of all our movie, TV, and animated projects. I work with [Marvel Films president] Avi Arad, and the two of us initiate these projects, trying to make sure we get the best writers and directors for them, and that the projects are placed at the best studios. [EDITOR'S NOTE: Marvel characters in various stages of big screen development now include the Black Panther, Blade, Daredevil, Doctor Strange, the Fantastic Four, the Hulk, Iron Man, Luke Cage, the Silver Surfer, Spider-Man and the X-Men, and for television, Black Widow, Generation X, Nick Fury, the Punisher and She-Hulk.]

But what the fans want to know is: Where are these movies already?

Nobody's saying it more than me.

Don't you think a point is going to come when you have to take a hardline with the studios and say, "Enough is enough. Let's get started on these!"?

I would do that if we felt the studios were dragging their heels. They're really not. The most important thing is to get a good script. If we have somebody hand in a script that isn't good enough and the studio says, "No, this isn't right,


SONY
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A Dangerous Game
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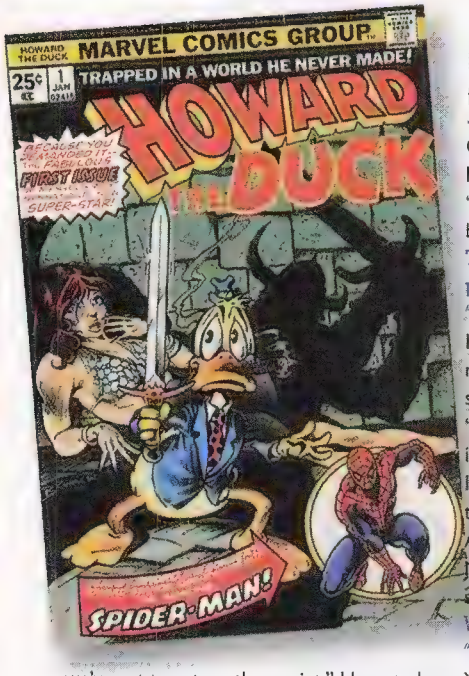

we've got to get another script," I have to be glad that the studio feels that way. What I'm afraid of is that they'll figure, "Hey, the X-Men are such great characters, it doesn't matter what the story is. People will go to the movie. Let's do it." We want these movies to be good. We've had enough of "Howard the Duck."

With rewrites being done on so many of these projects–not to mention Jim Cameron's Spider-Man movie being tied up in legal hell–how do you stay so optimistic?

I'm optimistic about everything [*laughs*].

But you say that part of the appeal to you of writing a comic book is the quick turnaround. Movies are a business where things grind along so slowly. .

But you learn. I mean, you have to live with the rules. People have said to me, "Don't you feel terrible that you don't own all the characters you created?" I don't feel terrible, because those were the rules when I created them. I've always lived by the rules. And I've learned what the rules are in Hollywood, and there's no way to change them. This is the way movies are made. So many times, if you read a project's history, it's five, six, eight years from the time somebody writes the script to the time the movie actually comes out. Some of them go fast, like "The Mask"—you get Jim Carrey, you get a good script, you get the studio into it, and in a year or two you're done. But those are the exceptions.

You've assigned something like half a dozen of your scripts to David Goyer, the writer doing the sequel to "The Crow." He seems to be a clever guy, but do you think it's a mistake to steer so much material to any one writer?

No, no. He's very fast and he's very good, and if he's able to do it, fine. The minute he turns in a bad script, we won't buy it. I had the same problem years ago when I worked for Martin Goodman. People used to say, "Why are you letting Stan do so many books?" And he'd say, "Well, the stories are good. When they stop being good, I won't let him do them."

Left: Lee assures us that any new Marvel movies won't follow in the footsteps of "Howard the Duck."

The real strength of Marvel Films to this point has been animation. How do you rate "X-Men" and the shows that have followed it?

I was watching "X-Men" the other day, and I marvel that after three years, the episodes seem as fresh and exciting as at the start. Then "Spider-Man" comes along, and in the first year it's the top-rated show. That's great too. And I think people will be incredibly impressed with the animation in the new season of "Marvel Action Hour." I think it's on a par with "X-Men" and "Spider-Man." It's a totally different show this season.

Was there a change in the creative team on "Marvel Action Hour"?

Yes. The personnel producing the show have all changed. The people doing the storyboards and layouts, the director—it's a new staff. I saw some of the early animation, and it's absolutely beautiful.

When did you decide to make the change?

Well, that wasn't my decision. But it was felt that the animation on the first season just

wasn't as good as it should be, and I agreed.

That's interesting, because at the same time, in interviews promoting "Marvel Action Hour," the lead producer didn't sound as married to the comics as the guys doing "X-Men" and "Spider-Man."

No, he did a great job. A lot of the things that were wrong with the animation were not his fault. It was beyond his control.

What do you think of the state of comics today?

I'm very proud of the guys at Marvel. I think there are a lot of new ideas, a lot of surprises in the books. You read the fanzines, and some people say, "We don't like that cloning business with Spider-Man." Well, you may not like it, but it sold. It created a lot of interest. And I think the "Age of Apocalypse" storyline in the X-Men books was brilliant. Obviously the stories are now a lot grittier and darker than they used to be years ago, but the world is grittier and darker.

Still, Marvel has dropped an awful lot of titles lately. Do you think the start-up of Image Comics in '92 left a talent vacuum?

One great thing about the comic business is that it has become so big and so many young people want to be artists and writers that there's no shortage of talent. Every day you get some 18-year-old kid who's a genius knocking on the door wanting to draw or write a book for you. And maybe I'm stupidly Pollyanna-ish, but I wished Image luck. They're all nice, talented guys, and for the most part they've succeeded, and I think it's great.

They seem to have harsher feelings about Marvel, though. Does that sadden you at all?

I can only speak from my point of view, but I think Marvel is a great company. I wouldn't have been here for over 50 years if I felt that these were less than decent people. God knows I get plenty of job offers.

Was there ever a point in your career where you felt a burning desire to head out and write a character for the other guys?

Years ago, when superhero stories seemed to be going nowhere, I would have loved to have written Superman, Batman and Wonder Woman. They don't seem to need me now, but I used to think, "Man, I bet I could really make them popular again." And I think I'd get a kick out of writing Lobo.

Of the stories you have written, what's your all-time favorite?

It's hard for me to say. Sometimes I'll look through a *Marvel Masterworks* or somebody will give me a book to autograph, and it'll be a story I've forgotten, and I'll say [*combustibly excited*], "Wow! That's one of my favorite stories!"

Oh, that's not *too* mind-blowing–"Ho-hum, I was just flipping through *Marvel Masterworks* the other day, looking at a story of mine that I had completely forgotten. ."

[*Laughing*] But there are so many. There was a *Daredevil* story I did about a blind, embittered Vietnam veteran who's in trouble, and Daredevil helps and encourages him [*Daredevil* #47]. I like stories that have some heart to them, some warmth, and I thought that one in particular did. Then there were the three Fantastic Four stories that are referred to as "The Galactus Trilogy" [*Fantastic Four* #48-#50]. I love that name. When I used to lecture at colleges, students would say, "Tell us about 'The Galactus Trilogy,'" and I'd feel so important. I thought my whole run of *Silver Surfer* stories with Buscema, from first to last, were as good a run of comic books as anyone has ever done. And I loved a lot of *The Amazing Spider-Man* books. Actually, I really can't tell you what my favorite comic was. I loved 'em all.

Tom Russo successfully fought off the urge to kiss the floor and chant "I'm not worthy!" when he visited with Stan Lee.

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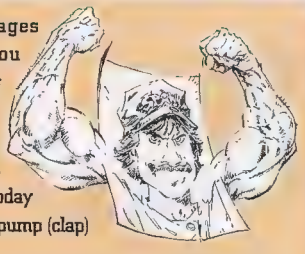
Greg Capullo's

KRASH COURSE

POWERFUL PAGES FAST

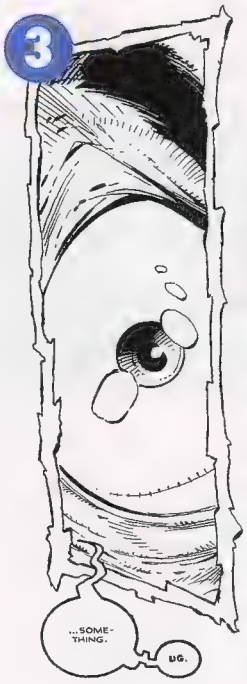


Are your pages puny? Are you tired of having eraser dust kicked in your face? If so, don't worry! Today ve're going to pump (clap) you up!

When you first start out drawing comics, it's sometimes hard to make your pages appear interesting. Sure it's a bit easier when there are guys ripping each other's faces off panel after panel, but when the quiet scenes come that's when terror sets in! "How do I make it look cool?" you ask with a tremble in your voice. Fear not, future comic gods! Uncle Greggy is gonna show you the way.

1. shock value

One of the main problems is that there's too much "sameness" in amateur pages. So what we'll do is give you some recipes for variety. First off we'll talk about the close-up. Although it's not possible 100 percent of the time, it's a good rule to include a close-up on every page. It's one of the simplest things you can do to instantly add some dynamics to your page. For instance, a close-up that follows a far shot will shock the reader by suddenly bringing them in close. You can use varying degrees in your close-ups such as a minimal head-and-shoulders close-up as shown in examples 1 and 2 or one that's so tight in you must use either preceding or proceeding panels to explain exactly what you're showing in that close-up like example 3. Close-ups can be used with people or things, depending on whether you're trying to convey a particular emotion or focus the reader in on a specific action or object shown in examples 4 and 5. One thing is for sure. .you'll have begun creating a more powerful page!



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2. larger than life

Another common technique is "shooting" past a large object in the foreground. When you do this, you immediately create visual interest through dynamic range. (Basically, the object in the foreground, though known to be actually smaller, appears larger than the larger object in the background.) Your focal point (what you want the reader to look at) can be either in the foreground or the background. It's your call as to how you want to play it or what you feel tells your story best. Ooh! I think I feel your muscles growing already!

3. the framing

Let's keep going. Next we have what's called the frame (not to be confused with the infamous O.J. Simpson defense). This is where the foreground funnels the eye directly to your focal point by means of surrounding it. Your foreground framing device can either be inconsequential or a secondary focal point. You can also use the frame to invoke emotions like feelings of being trapped, imprisoned, claustrophobic, etc. I'm sure you could evoke some nicer emotions as well, depending on what you use as your frame.

4. who turned out the lights?

Another close relative to the large object in the foreground is the dark object in the foreground. When you use this technique you now have two types of contrast going on simultaneously. Very powerful! Once again you can add some sort of emotional impact to the panel depending on what you use as your foreground object. Or you can simply use the object for visual diversity. The object or objects can be partially lit or totally silhouetted. Your call. But either way, call it powerful!

5. 'two silhouettes on the shade...'

Speaking of silhouettes, when used judiciously they can help pump up an otherwise flat page. You can use the silhouette to create mood, obscure graphic violence, etc. One thing is sure, though. It has to be easy to read. There can be absolutely no question as to what the objects are or what action is taking place. If slivers of highlight are needed, so be it. Otherwise make sure the outlines are distinct and recognizable to all.

4. heads up...er...down!

Lastly, (for now) the downshot! If you ask me, along with the close-up you should also try to include a downshot on every page. Like the close-up, there are varying degrees of the downshot. You can use a slight overhead shot or an extreme downshot where you view your subject from directly overhead! Sometimes an overview will help convey necessary story information better than some other shot would. Other times, it may be used to add a bizarre feeling to your story. Either way, the dynamic value is there because we mostly see things from normal eye level. When you suddenly take the reader up above, he gets to see things from an angle that he's less accustomed to. That adds interest and interest adds power!

Try adding cast shadows in your downshot also . In fact, be creative! Combine the techniques I've shown you here to create hybrids. There aren't any restrictions! Explore, don't bore!

Vell, dat concludes zis month's "Krash Course." I hope you got a vantastic pump! Next month I'll give you some more steroids to inject your pages vith. No more vill you be smudged around and forced to eat pencil shavings after I'm done vith you. Till next month. .keep the lead burnin', tough guys! **W**

Greg Capullo can be seen every month penciling Spawn, *published by Image Comics.*

DRAWING BOARD

Who needs the pros? This is the show for **Wizard Readers' Art**. The eight super people whose artwork got an honorable mention this month will each receive a *Action Comics* #700 signed by Roger Stern and a *War Machine* #1 signed by Len Kaminski. Each of the three solid runners-up will score a copy of *Avengers* #375 signed by Bob Harras, a *Flash* #0 signed by Mark Waid and a *StormWatch Special* #1 signed by Ron Marz. Dong Thor, the sensational artist of the winning entry this month will receive all that snappy stuff, plus an original piece of The Maxx art painted by Sam Kieth (thanks muchly, guy)! A big ol' congrats to all of you!

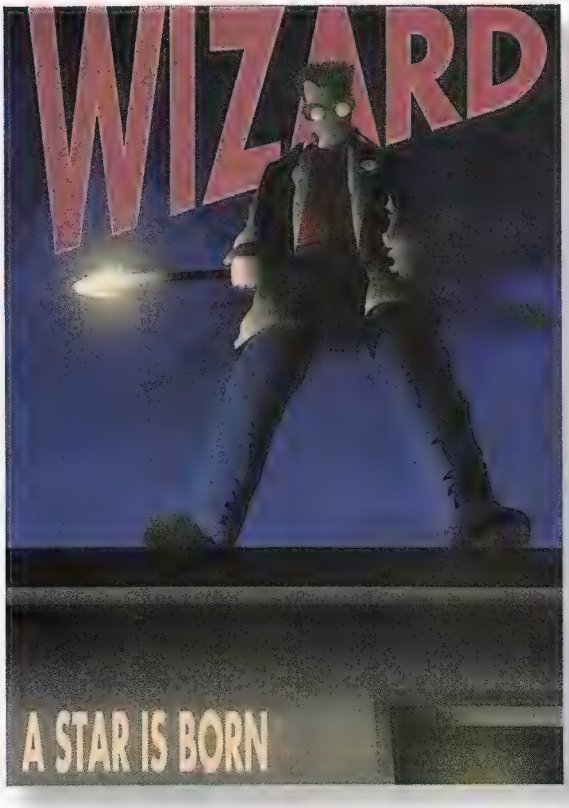
GRAND PRIZE

MORTAL KOMBAT Dong Thor Fitchburg, MA

RUNNERS-UP

BATMAN /GRENDEL **Bobby De Goot** Bakel, The Netherlands

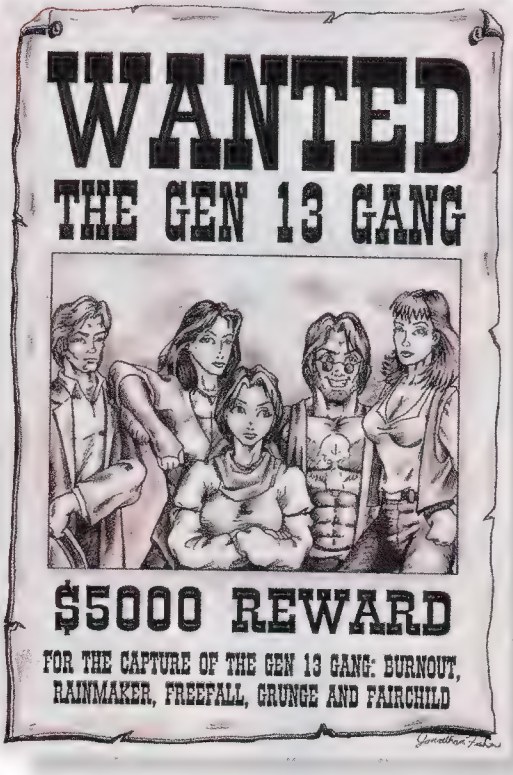
STARMAN **Orion Harbour** Orland, CA



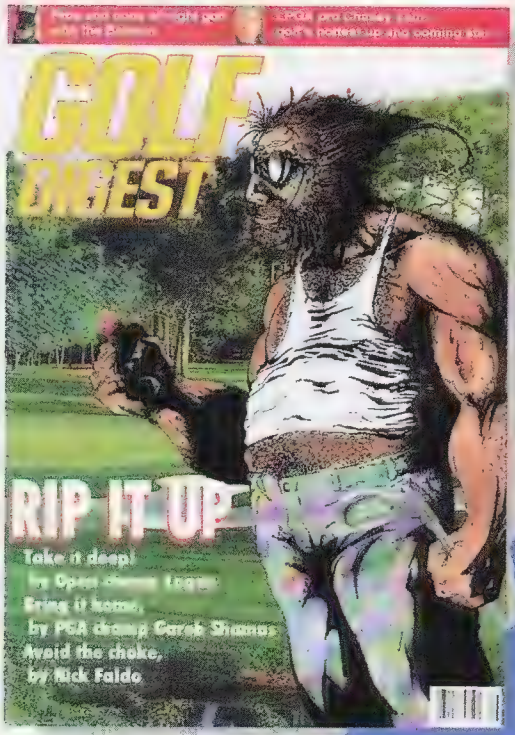
X **William Lloyd** Billerica, MA

HONORABLE MENTION

DEATH
Lisa Valdez
Bend, OR

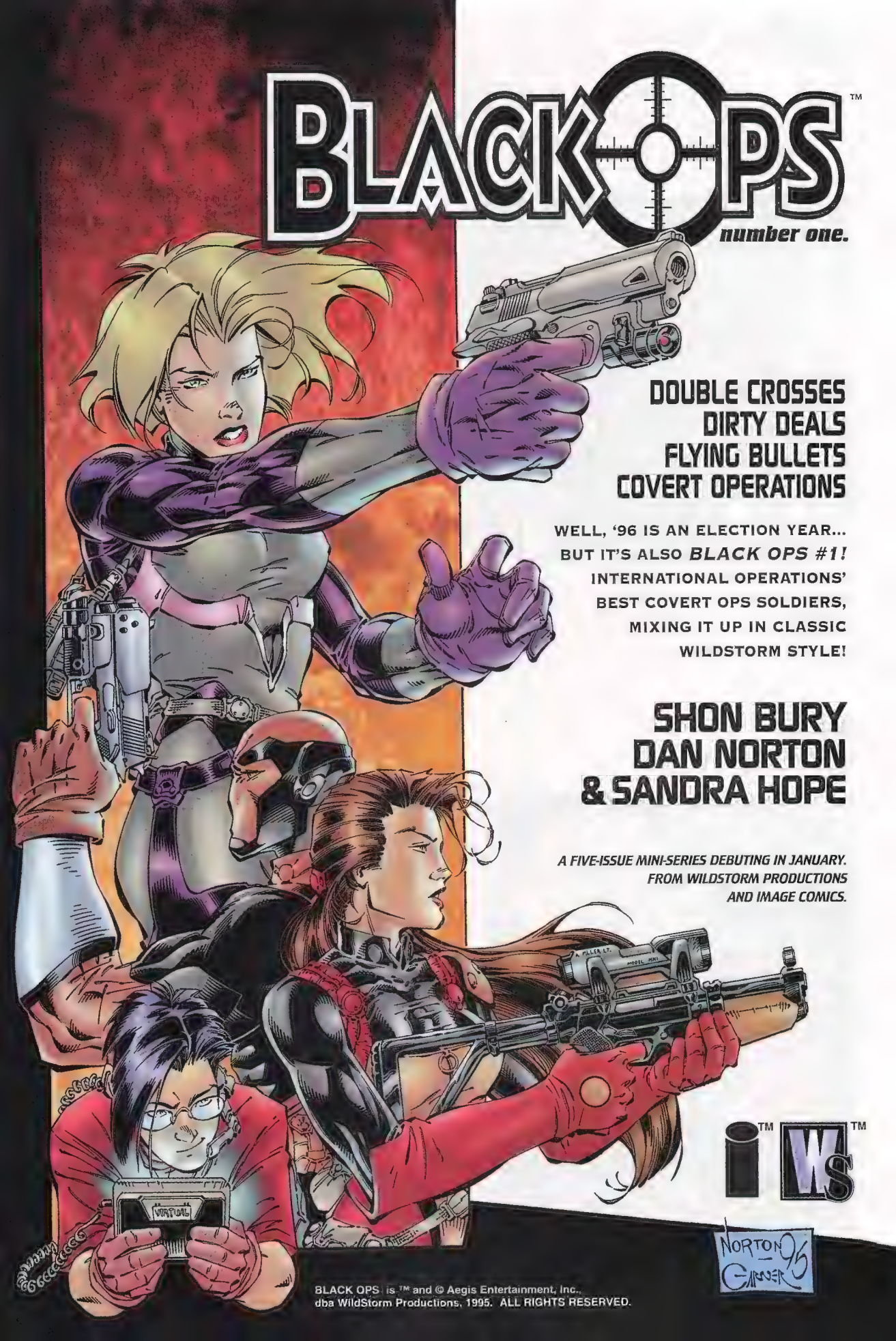


GEN[13]
Jonathan Fisher
Bedford, IN



WOLVERINE, THE GOLF PRO
James Baker
Jupiter, FL

SHI
Chris Long
Claymont, DE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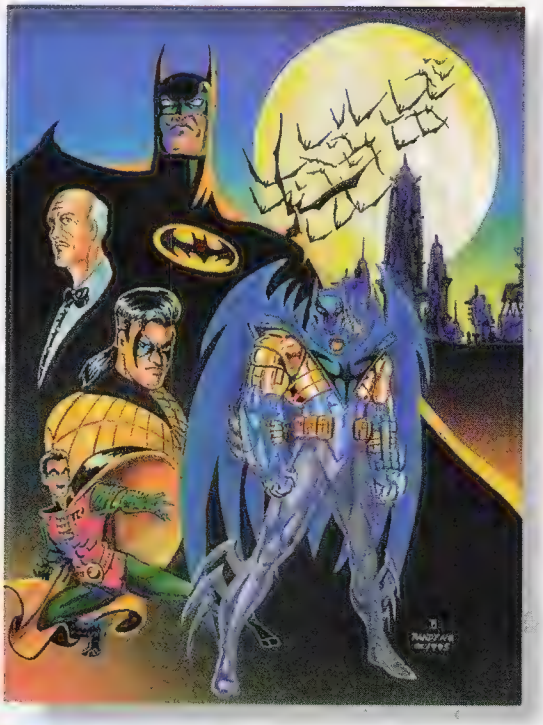
Perkasie, PA

ASH
Marvin Aleman
Brooklyn, NY

BATMAN
TJ Frias and Randy Ng
San Jose, CA



Want your art to appear on one of these four pages in future issues? Think you've got what it takes? (Hey—quality *and* originality count, y'know.) Then send your Drawing Board entries to:

Drawing Board
c/o Wizard Press
151 Wells Avenue
Congers, NY 10920-2064

And follow these rules or else: Use any form of unlined paper or posterboard (no larger than 8 inches by 11 1/4 inches) and any medium (oils, crayon, mustard, etc.—but not neon inks). Put your name, full address and TELEPHONE NUMBER on the back of your piece, and mail it flat to avoid damage. All entries are nonreturnable and become the property of Wizard Press. Employees of Wizard Press are the sole judges of the contests, and all decisions are final. Got it? Good luck!

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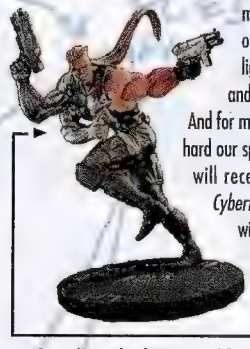
SON OF HOMEMADE HEROES

THE ARENA FOR FAN-MADE ACTION FIGURES.

It's back! The hoppin' love child of Homemade Heroes returns. What we do occasionally around here to keep things movin' is bump the regular "I made a Cerebus figure out of three raisins and some lint" act and instead, spotlight a bunch of neato toys mixed with a touch of props, and bingo, we've got ourselves Son of Homemade Heroes. And for making such cool works of art—and making us laugh so hard our spleens ruptured—every one of these talented creators will receive a Cyberforce toy three-pack and a copy of *Cyberforce #0* signed by Marc Silvestri. The two Runners-Up will get all that cool stuff, *plus* a copy of *Cyberforce #3* signed by that Silvestri fella. The Grand Prize Winner runs off with all that loot plus an awesome Mattel Stryker Polystone statue. Congratulations to everyone!

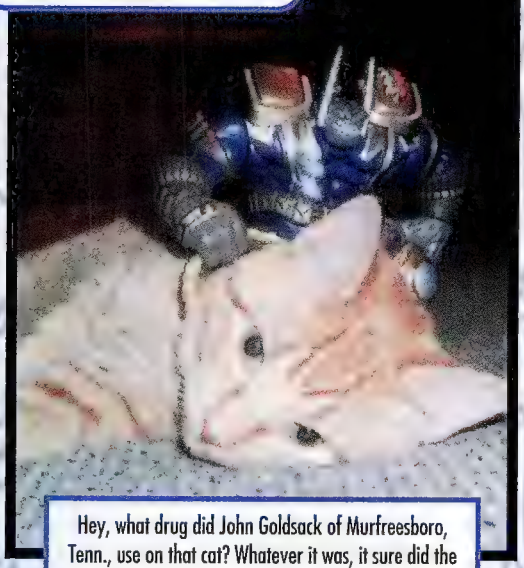


Super-duper thanks to Mattel for donatin' these way cool prizes! You folks can crash at our pad anytime!

MATTEL

GRAND PRIZE

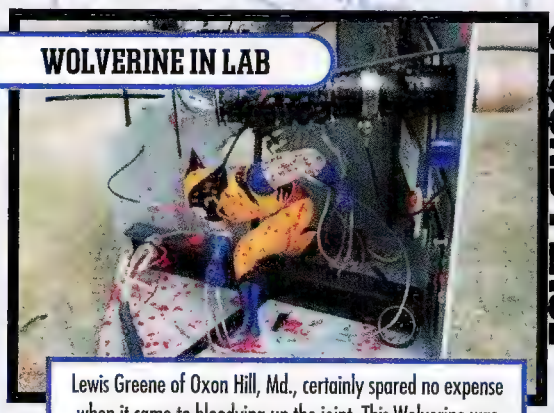
BADROCK VS. THE CAT



Hey, what drug did John Goldsack of Murfreesboro, Tenn., use on that cat? Whatever it was, it sure did the trick. Anyway, it's a really cool effect with that McFarlane Toys Badrock figure.

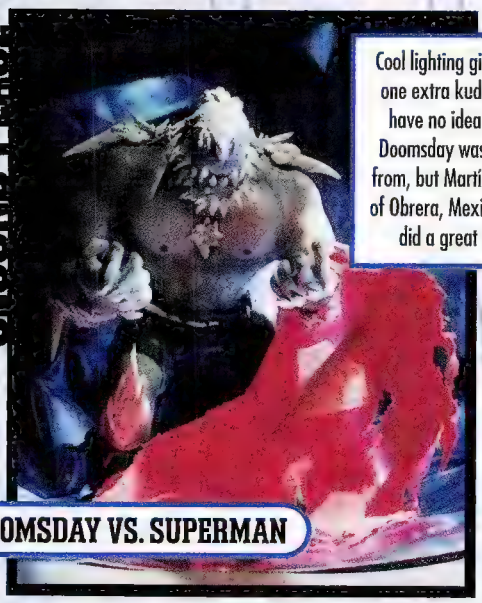
SECOND PLACE

WOLVERINE IN LAB



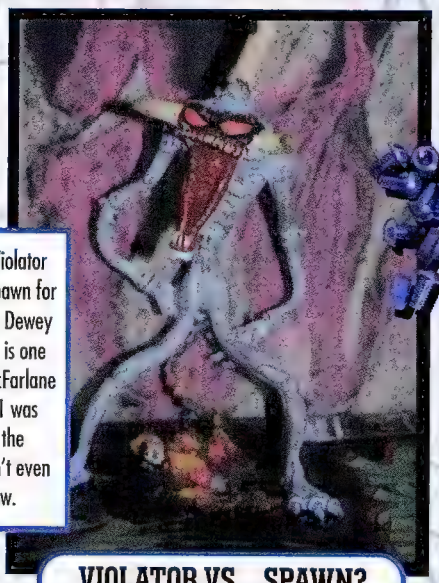
Lewis Greene of Oxon Hill, Md., certainly spared no expense when it came to bloodying up the joint. This Wolverine was made from the Wolvie Horizon model, and the lab was made from wood, Plexiglas, foamcore, wire, paper towel roll and tons of acrylic paint.

SECOND PLACE



Cool lighting gives this one extra kudos. We have no idea what Doomsday was made from, but Martín López of Obrera, Mexico, sure did a great job.

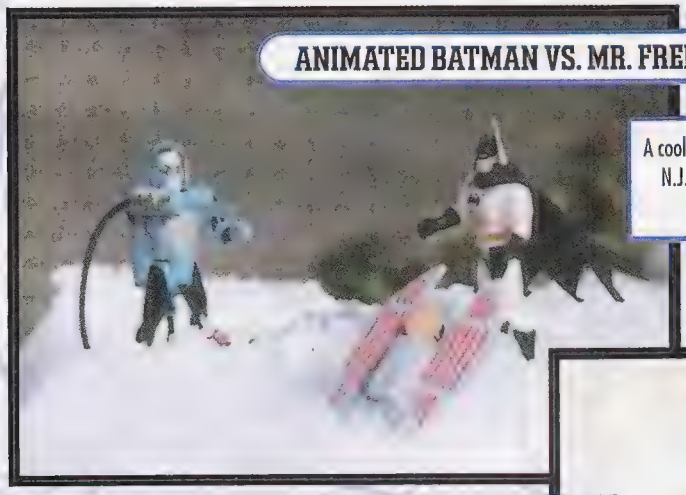
DOOMSDAY VS. SUPERMAN



Eeugh. Guess Violator really can eat Spawn for breakfast. Reed Dewey of Ithaca, N.Y., is one sick puppy. A McFarlane Toys Violator 1 was used; as for the mush…we don't even wanna know.

VIOLATOR VS....SPAWN?

ANIMATED BATMAN VS. MR. FREEZE

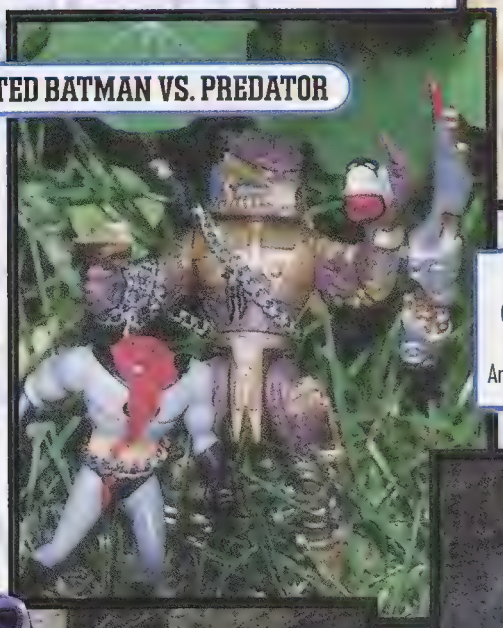


A cool snowy setting wins Richard M. Kellum of Haddonfield, N.J., some extra style points. Figures used are Kenner's B:TAS Mr. Freeze and an Anti-Freeze Batman.

ALIEN VS. RAPHAEL

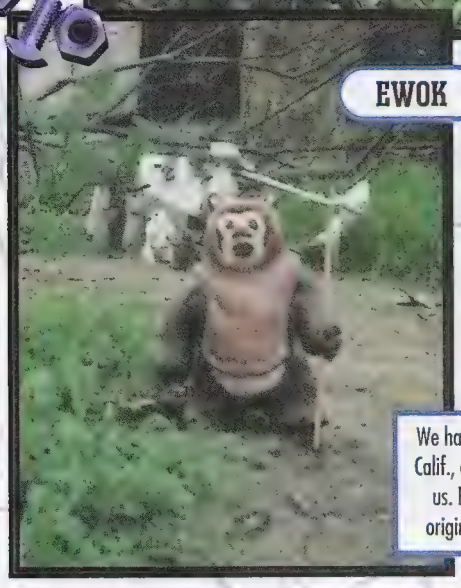
Adam Grommes of Albuquerque, N.M., pits two marketing giants in a battle to end all battles. Guess who wins? Figures used are the original Raphael from Playmates' Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle line and the Alien from Kenner's Alien vs. Predator two-pack.

ANIMATED BATMAN VS. PREDATOR

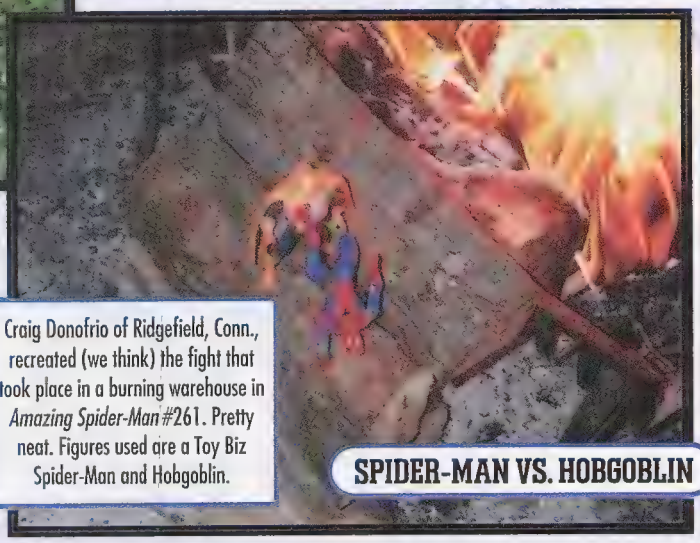


Yeowch! Well, we guess in the perfect world of Gilles Glivier Guegan of Chula Vista, Calif., the Predator would win this bout. Gilles used a Combat Belt Batman from Kenner's Batman: The Animated Series toy line and a Kenner Spiked Tail Predator figure.

EWOK



We have no idea what Rene Bolanos of Whittier, Calif., did to make this Ewok, but it looks good to us. Background accessories include Kenner's original Chewbacca, R2-D2, Wicket and AT-ST.

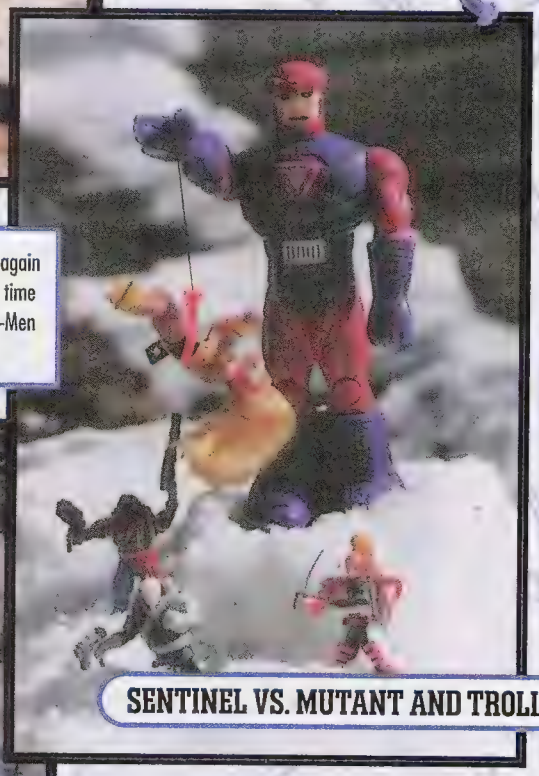


Craig Donofrio of Ridgefield, Conn., recreated (we think) the fight that took place in a burning warehouse in *Amazing Spider-Man* #261. Pretty neat. Figures used are a Toy Biz Spider-Man and Hobgoblin.

SPIDER-MAN VS. HOBGOBLIN

ALIEN VS. PREDATOR

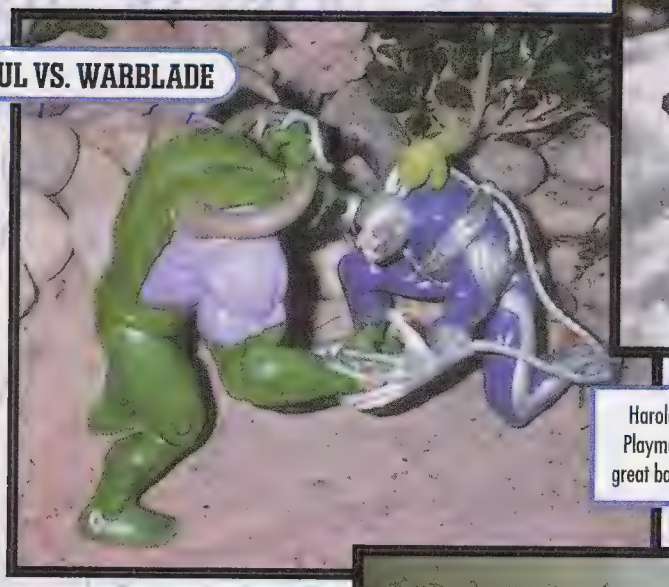
Made completely from clay, (deep breath) Cesar Armando Jimenez Alvarez of Veracruz, Mexico, did a bang-up job depicting one of the nastiest fights of the century!



Richard M. Kellum of Haddonfield, N.J., is at it again (he did the Batman/Mr. Freeze one, too). This time with a Battle Troll and some familiar Toy Biz X-Men figures (Bishop, Cable 1 and Shatterstar).

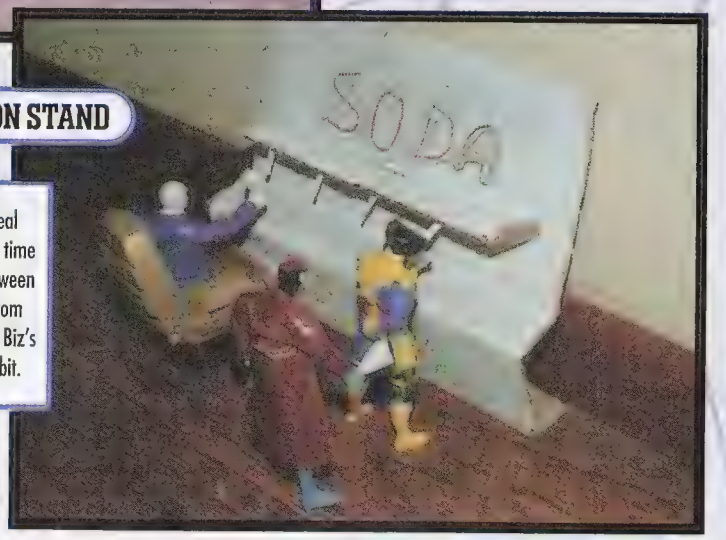
SENTINEL VS. MUTANT AND TROLL

MAUL VS. WARBLADE



Harold Buivantri of Houston, Texas, pitted the Playmates-crafted figures against each other. A great background gives this one a really nice look.

X-MEN AT THE CONCESSION STAND

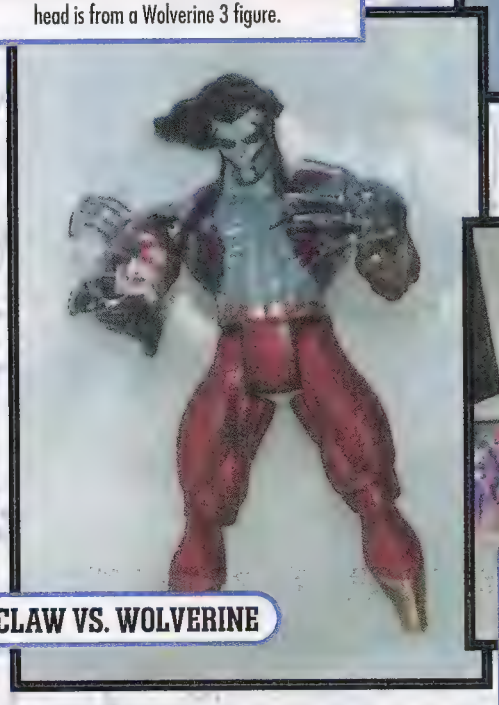


John and Sharon Panian of Seal Beach, Calif., reveal for the first time what the X-Men really do in between panels. The stand was made from cardboard. Figures used are Toy Biz's Prof. X, Wolverine 3 and Gambit.

John M. Munjak of Lenexa, Kan., didn't tell us what Doomsday was made from, but judging from this scene, we wouldn't wanna stop and ask. Fodder figures include a Kenner Super Powers Flash, Superman and Wonder Woman, as well as a Capt. Atom made from a Toy Biz Superman.

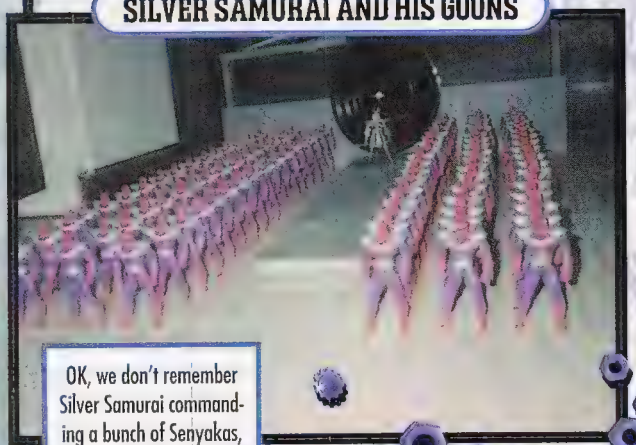
DOOMSDAY VS. EVERYONE

It's the Battle of the Claws! We figger James and Lalaine Guevarra of Fort Knox, Ky., have a bead on just who'd win. Ripclaw was made from a Toy Biz Smythe head, legs from a Toy Biz Kraven, and body and arms from a Toy Biz Trevor Fitzroy. The Wolvie head is from a Wolverine 3 figure.



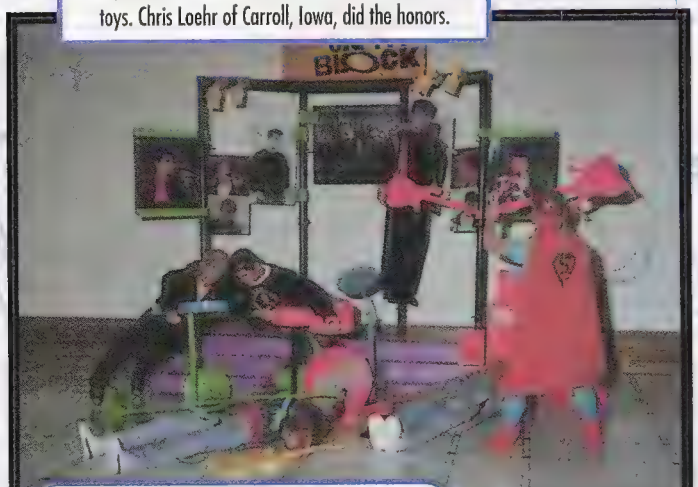
RIPCLAW VS. WOLVERINE

SILVER SAMURAI AND HIS GOONS



OK, we don't remember Silver Samurai commanding a bunch of Senyakas, but that's all right. Mike Kadin of Tustin, Calif., just sees him that way. Figures used are Toy Biz's Silver Samurai and 96 Senyakas. (96!!!)

A dream scenario if ever we saw one. Superman was made from a Mattel Ken doll with a homemade costume, while the New Kids on the Block are the genuine toys. Chris Loehr of Carroll, Iowa, did the honors.



SUPERMAN VS. THE NEW KIDS

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If you're interested in submitting your own imaginative figure landscape scene with action figures (whether the figures are homemade or not) entry in the hopes of winning some cool stuff, send several well lit, clear, color photographs (no Polaroids, dammit!) to:

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EIGHT TO THE FORE '96

CHARLES ADLARD
EDVIN BIUKOVIC
DANKO MACAN
GENE HA
RON GARNEY
KEVIN LAU
WARREN ELLIS
HUMBERTO RAMOS

A LOOK AT EIGHT CREATIVE TALENTS TO KEEP YOUR EYES ON

By Marc Shapiro

Charles Adlard

TWENTY to 25 penciled pages a week are extremely productive. Fifteen fully penciled and inked pages are insane. To say that Charles Adlard is faster than a speeding bullet is a gross understatement. For, in a comic book sense, he's faster than that.

"I do have a reputation for being ridiculously fast," agrees the talented Brit currently drawing Topps Comics' *X-Files* and *Mars Attacks* series. "Part of it is discipline and part of it just comes naturally to me. I'm not one of those people who gets up at noon and starts thinking about doing some work at three. I treat this like I'm going off to a real job."

A real job being something Adlard did not have for a long time. Born in England and raised on a steady diet of Marvel UK books, the 29-year-old initially put what he describes as "more than the normal amount of drawing skills" on the back burner in favor of film and video studies at an arts oriented university. "I think that was sort of the typical adolescent thing. I finished the course and then realized that was not what I really wanted to do."

After college, Adlard joined a rock band and spent eight months in London where he failed "to take the rock music industry by storm."

"I moved back into my parents home with my tail between my legs," he winces at the memory. "I remember sitting around thinking, 'What am I going to do now?' I thought, 'Well I can still draw, I can try the comics thing again.' I had stopped drawing in college but as soon as I started putting pen to paper again I thought, 'Why did I want to do all those other things?' "

Adlard spent the next two years dragging his portfolio around to the London and Glasgow comic book conventions. "That was easily the hardest work I had ever done in my life."

But it all paid off when Adlard was offered a one-shot Judge Dredd script for *2000 A.D.*. Followed in short order by an eight-issue run on *Armitage Book 2* for Fleetway, the *Dances With Demons* series for the aborted Frontier Comics, and the never-to-be-seen *Bloodrush* mini-series from Marvel UK. "That's when a bit of work started trickling in from America," he recalls. "I did some of *Black Orchid Annual* #1 for DC and a two-part Scarlet Witch story for *Marvel Comics Presents* #143 and #144. Then I went to Defiant and did *Dark Dominion* #4 and *Good Guys* #3. It was sort of a period where I was just flailing around. I had work coming in but nothing solid."

Solid became a reality when Adlard stumbled onto the Topps goldmine. He started off with the five-issue *Mars Attacks* mini-series which led to the prestigious *X-Files* gig and ongoing *Mars Attacks* series. The workload eventually became too much for even Adlard's nimble fingers and he recently gave up *Mars Attacks* to concentrate solely on *The X-Files*, a book that has seen him take some heat as well as applause.

"I'm riding the crest of a wave of a very successful book and it's nice to think that people are looking past the phe-

Charles Adlard went from drawing an invading race of aliens, *Mars Attacks* (right), to his chores on the alien-chasing *X-Files*.

nomena and actually taking a good look at my work. I took a lot of heat early on because of the question of the characters' likenesses. I thought, 'Is that all they're noticing? What about the mood?' But now they're noticing the other things and that's especially nice."

Adlard's *X-Files* duties which, he explains, "take in what I consider my really dark style of drawing and inking," is presently precluding him from other immediate jobs. But his current status fulfills, what he believes, is his destiny. "I started drawing when I was four years old. There was a sense at that point that I would end up here. It's like comics are what I was put on this planet to do."

Edvin Biukovic

WHEN it comes to drawing comics, Croatian artist Edvin Biukovic says he is his own worst enemy. "I have a really nervous hand that's a real problem. My penciling is pretty precise but, when I get to inking, my hands just go crazy because I get so impatient. So I end up drawing a little different each time and have ended up with this strange combination of drawings."

Biukovic, 26, began drawing at an early age. "Initially, I thought art would only be a hobby but I had to decide, at a certain point, which high school I was going to, so I went to art school. That was my first big decision. I thought, 'Well if I can draw, why can't I make a living out of it?' I decided to get into comics during my first year of high school when my professor said, 'Oh, God! We have another comic book artist here.' What he meant, was that there was a small group of us going through the art school doing the same thing. I met [writer and frequent collaborator] Darko Macan about that time."

Biukovic spent a mandatory year in the Croatian army before landing his first comic job with Macan and other writers working on a German horror book. "To tell you the truth, that book was crap. They tried to look like classic EC Comics stories from *Tales From The Crypt* but we had to draw the stories without blood. We couldn't even use that much black ink because they didn't really want to scare the readers," he laughs.

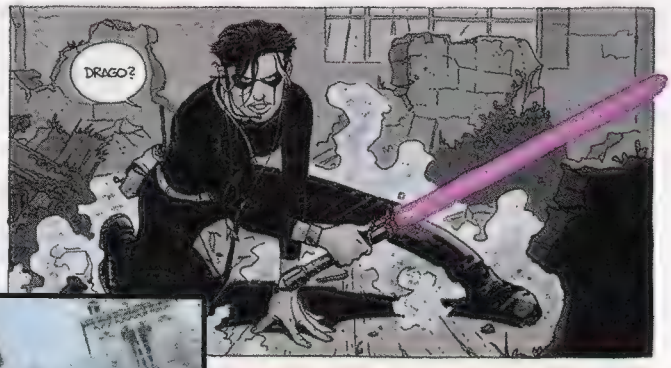
He went on to do some work for a European children's magazine before the conflict in his homeland forced him to seek more lucrative employment as a jack-of-all-trades at the prestigious Zagreb Films animated production company. "I directed some short propaganda films and did some storyboarding and coloring."

Biukovic returned to comics two years later with an independent graphic novel compilation of his and fellow countryman Darko Macan's old horror strips entitled *Quotes*.

"Then we did the proposal for the *Grendel Tales: Devils and Deaths* and now I'm doing four issues of *Star Wars: X-Wing—Rogue Squadron* for Dark Horse [written by Macan]," he chuckles.

Biukovic considers both *Grendel Tales—Devils and Deaths* and *Devil's Choices*—as his best work to date. As for his dream project? "I'd like to work with that bastard Frank Miller," he roars. "Not just anything though. I'd like to collaborate with him on that pulpy, hardboiled stuff."

Biukovic is low key and almost apologetic when it comes to assessing his sudden rise to popularity. "I've been lucky. If anything, I've been too lucky. I have too much work. I was nothing a year ago and now people know me. It's quite scary but it's also quite satisfying."



Croation creators Macan (left) and Biukovic (right) are ready to take on a worldwide audience. Above and below: Scenes from *Grendel Tales.*

Darko Macan

WRITER Darko Macan is most proud of his work on the pair of *Grendel Tales*' mini-series (the two-part *Devils and Deaths* and the four-part *Devil's Choices*), published by Dark Horse Comics within the past year. The reason being that their themes struck very close to home; his home being war-torn Croatia. "*Grendel Tales: Devils and Deaths* is easily the most personal of my work. I liked the idea of the whole warring clans storyline. Because of the current situation in Croatia, there were some things I felt that were important to tell about war."

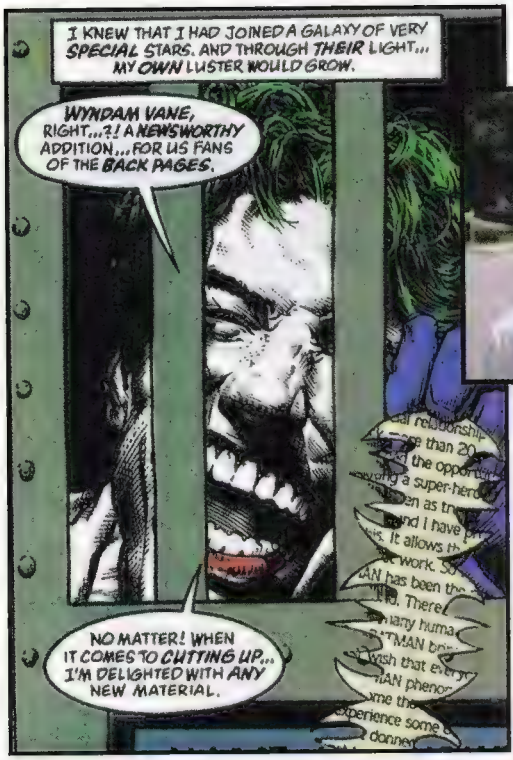
In line with Macan's sense of real world sensibilities, it comes as no surprise that the 29-year-old writer's strong points are in the characters. "If I have a particular style, it's that I tend to put the accent on the characters instead of the action. I care for the characters. I also like to put something a little downbeat in every story. I never like to have completely happy endings."

Macan, born and raised in Zagreb, Croatia, got his early comic book fix with a mixture of Tom and Jerry comic books, and classical adventure and humor strips from European magazines. "I had been writing since about age 13 and had already decided to get into comics in elementary school. But I knew I didn't draw that well. So I went to college and majored in history and archaeology."

But while hitting the books, Macan did begin to make some inroads in comics. He began selling one-page humor strips to the Croation science fiction magazine *Sirius* and a weekly gag strip for a newspaper. His drawing chops also improved to the point where he wrote and drew the Croatian version of Tom and Jerry. "By the time I graduated I was already working pretty regularly in comics and so I never worked in what I got a degree in."

The writer became known to American audiences through his collaboration with artist Edvin Biukovic on the successful *Grendel Tales* two-parter and its follow-up sequel. He was then tapped to reunite with Biukovic on Dark Horse's *Star Wars: X-Wing–Rogue Squadron* #5-#8. Currently, Macan is writing *Donald Duck* for yet another European publisher and is in active negotiation to script a superhero book for Dark Horse.

The writer's dream project, he claims, is one that he will most likely never get. "The books that I would most like to write are the books written and drawn by the creators. Books by Stan Sakai and Frank Miller. Those are the books that are so good that I wouldn't want to work on them."



Gene Ha takes a shot at drawing (and inking!) some familiar villains.

Macan is quite serious about the writing craft. So much so that he admits that talking about what he does for a living is a difficult proposition. "Talking about writing tends to sound so shallow. I just do it. It's just really hard to explain."

Gene Ha

GENE HA'S first rejection letter came from Marvel Comics. And it was a beauty.

"It said my faces and anatomy needed work," says the 26-year-old Ha, reading off the missive that has a prize place in his archives. "It said my line-work was stiff and my backgrounds and textures were weak. I was depressed for about a week after that."

These days Ha is having the last laugh, working regularly on such titles as last year's Marvel mini-series *The Adventures of Cyclops and Phoenix* and its sequel four-parter, *X-Men: Askani'son*, in a style that shows he has grown some since those Marvel rejection blues. "I guess my style is a little understated. I'm in love with small details, textures and expressions. I guess what I do is not as rock 'n' roll as some artists' styles."

Ha, born in Chicago and raised in Indiana, was drawing at an early age and, buoyed by "huge piles of *Green Lantern* and *Daredevil*," decided to make comic books his life's work. But, he chuckles, forces were conspiring to steer him in another direction. "My mom kept telling me these horror stories about how artists either starved to death or ended up cutting off one or both of their ears. That didn't dissuade me but I was really scared when I finally went to a comic book convention and met a couple of artists who told me, 'Do you think we'd dress like this if we made any money?' "

Ha studied Commercial Illustration at the College of Creative Studies and Art School in Detroit, convinced that the scary stories about the comics industry outweighed any advantages and "that there was no way I was going to get into it." But during his final year of college, the artist remembers talking to a comic shop owner who convinced him "that things had changed and I could make money at it."

About the time Ha was coming down from his Marvel rejection, he received a call from DC "saying they liked my stuff and they wanted to see more samples." The call ultimately resulted in Ha landing his first big time gig on *Green Lantern* #36. "Needless to say I was overjoyed."

More DC work, *Green Lantern Quarterly* #8, *DC Universe: Trinity* #1, and *Green Lantern* #44 and #45, followed before Ha took a quick detour to Malibu to do *The Night Man* #2 and #3. Shortly thereafter he got a call from Bob Harras. "I didn't believe it was really him on the line so I played it cool. It turned out it was." Which led to *The Adventures of Cyclops and Phoenix* and his Dark Horse four-part mini-series *Oktane*.

Upcoming projects for Ha include a second *Oktane* mini-series and, what the pencil pusher considers his greatest hit to date, *Showcase '95* #11—an Arkham Asylum tale of an inmate doing mental combat with the Joker, Poison Ivy and Killer Croc. "I'm really proud of that one because I got to ink as well as pencil it. It was a project I had total control of."

Something he feels he has not had total control of, to this point, has been his career. "I think I've been incredibly lucky. I don't think I ever expected too much adulation, so I think I'm in a good place to deal with whatever popularity I have now."

Ron Garney

BEFORE he got into comics, artist Ron Garney was a bartender and a nightclub manager. The transition from mixing drinks to drawing superheroes, he says, was not easy. "I used to be a real socialite, so it was a real shock to go from talking to hundreds of people to talking to no one."

The reason the 33-year-old does not get out much is that, these days, he's putting in overtime getting *Captain America* back on the map. "And this is really

Ron Garney's breathing new life into Captain America.

With almost no exposure, watch for Kevin Lau to explode on the comics scene in the next few months.

my dream project. The character really has a redeeming quality to it. He's real positive, which is fine with me because I was getting tired of doing all those dark characters."

Garney, born and raised in Connecticut on a steady diet of *The Incredible Hulk*, Tarzan and Spider-Man comics, was a self-described brat as a child. "My teachers used to throw chalk at me. My art teacher was the best shot which, I guess, had to be considered an omen."

Garney graduated from "little stick figures" to a viable drawing talent and, after graduating from Louisiana's Southern University with a graphic design degree, he supplemented his bartending income with freelance graphic design work. He's candid in saying that comics were not in the picture. "Back then I couldn't see doing it as a career because it just didn't pay that well. I sent some samples out at one point but I don't think anybody looked at them because I never got anything back. Finally I reached a transitional point artwise and decided to give it a shot. But I vowed that I wouldn't show my stuff until I was ready. So I avoided the comic book conventions and all the normal ways of getting into the business."

Eventually, Garney felt he was ready and showed his wares to veteran artist Mike Zeck at a convention. "He told me I was good enough so I went in." His first work was a fill-in for Marvel's *G.I. Joe* #110. That led to other Marvel jobs, including *Daredevil* #296-#304, *Moon Knight* (2nd series) #26-#39, *Nightstalkers* #1-#8 and *Ghost Rider* (3rd series) #39-#52 followed. Also in the Garney mix were *X-Men* (2nd series) #41, *Uncanny X-Men* #321 and *Wolverine* #86. But it is *Captain America* that is proving to be Garney's Holy Grail. "Considering the book was not doing well, I considered it a real opportunity. I get a lot of creative freedom and the book is allowing me to create my own individual style for the first time."

His dream project is a bit less specific. "*Silver Surfer* would be good. I think a Predator book would be fun to do. There's a lot out there I'd like to do."

In looking at his career, Garney is philosophical. "There have been times when I go 'Gee! How lucky I am.' And then there are the times when I'm under so much pressure that I want to run away screaming. It's funny sometimes. Especially when I realize that I have no social life now that I'm in this business. But I guess you would consider that dark comedy," he laughs.

Kevin Lau

IS KEVIN LAU surprised at the advance buzz that his work has given him? "I'm shocked! I'm totally shocked! Nothing of mine has been published in the United States so far, so I'm really blown away that I'm being recognized."

Lau's slim body of work consists of a three issue stint on a Hong Kong based book called *Born to Kill* and a humorous monster-on-the-rampage one-shot for Valiant in November called *The PunX Special: Manga PunX*. The buzz centers on Lau's cutting edge approach to putting pencil to paper.

"I'm trying to go for a new style that combines influences from American and Japanese comics," he explains. "From the American books, I'm borrowing techniques for drawing anatomy. From the Japanese comics I'm using the techniques of drawing faces and expressions and the approach to doing the details in uniforms and in backgrounds. I like the idea that everything is well defined in my work."

Lau, 22, was born and raised in Hong Kong. "I was a fairly normal kid," he recalls. "I studied a lot. I drew a lot."

He began drawing at age five. Raised on a steady diet of American and Japanese comics, it came as no surprise when Lau, who attended high school and majored in illustration at the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York, decided to get into comics. It also didn't hurt that Lau's uncle was a comic book publisher in Hong Kong.

"My uncle saw I had the talent and he wanted to do a comic so he gave me the opportunity. But I couldn't do it long distance, so I had to return to China."

Lau returned to Hong Kong to pencil the three-issue superhero book which was also writ-

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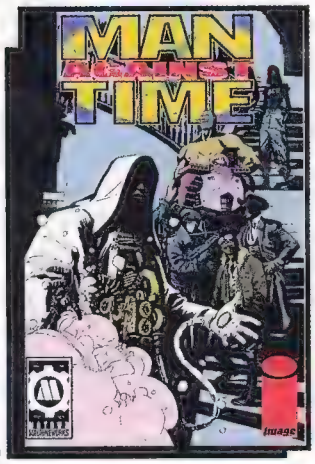

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Warren Ellis shot to fame with his "real life" depiction of Marvel heroes in *Ruins* (above).

ten by his uncle, Chris Lau. "But I didn't like Hong Kong that much. The lifestyle was better for me in the States. So I returned and hooked up with Valiant for the *Manga PunX* book."

Lau is very much a proponent of the emerging manga influence in the U.S. "A lot of the animation and comics I see are moving in that direction. I think it will definitely be an influence on the industry in the next couple of years."

Lau has no future work lined up but he does have a very short wish list. "I'd love to work on an Image book with somebody like Jim Lee and Marc Silvestri. If I could work with those guys that would be great."

What is also great is the growing notoriety that continues to be there for Lau, even after the shock has worn off. "I've been real lucky so far. I don't know what's coming next but I think I can handle it."

Warren Ellis

"I DO THE TWISTED STUFF, the straight superhero stuff, the X-stuff," chuckles prolific British writer Warren Ellis. "If there's a style running through all of that, I haven't the faintest idea what it is."

There's much of that sort of smart alecky, tongue-in-cheek spirit running through Ellis' work. It's there in his current projects for Marvel, a la the *Carnage: Mindbomb* one-shot, the four-issue *Storm* mini-series, the ongoing *Excalibur, Thor, Doom: 2099* and Malibu's *UltraForce*.

The 27-year-old Ellis, born and raised in England, cut his teeth on comic book adaptations of popular TV series like "Thunderbirds" and "Project: UFO." He remembers that writing of any sort was not in his plans until his post school gig as manager of a bookstore. "There were these magazines called *Fantasy Advertiser* and *Speakeasy* and I wrote them a filthy letter about the quality of their journalism. I got a call from *Speakeasy* wanting to know if I wanted to do some stories for them and so I got into comic book journalism."

Ellis, who rediscovered comics in his teens with the advent of *Watchmen* and *Yummy Fur* in the mid-'80s, had dabbled with comic writing in the past and even had a short strip published in *Deadline Magazine*. So, when the aforementioned magazines decided to get into comics publishing, Ellis claims, "I knew the medium and so I felt it was worth taking a crack at telling my stories in comics."

His first job was a series called *Electric Angel* for Trident. When Trident quickly folded, Ellis jumped to an anthology mag called *Blast* which became the first home for his cyberpunk strip "Lazarus' Churchyard." From the ashes of *Blast* came Tundra UK which continued his "Lazarus" run. Then Tundra UK folded, leaving him in a rut with lots of unpublished work. "I was hugely pissed off at this point. I had just moved in with my girlfriend and we were barely making the rent and, bang, there goes Tundra UK."

Ellis' rage was quelled when a two-year old pitch for DC's *Batman: Legends of the Dark Knight* found its intended target. "Editor Archie Goodwin finally got around to reading it, phoned me up and said, 'I want this.' That was my first stateside break." It has yet to be published.

Break two was the monthly *Hellstorm* for Marvel followed by *Excalibur, Doom: 2099, Druid, Dr. Strange* and *Ruins* which brought Ellis U.S. recognition, and his workload hasn't let up since.

His workmanlike nature comes to bare when discussing the state of his career and whatever level of popularity he's achieved to this point. "I get work. In this business that's

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success. The comic book industry is like the acting profession in that 90 percent of the profession is out of work at any one time. So if I'm in a position to be considered an up-and-coming talent, I consider myself damned lucky."

Humberto Ramos

OVER THE YEARS Spider-Man has changed the course of many lives in his stories on the paneled page. But few compare to the real life impact the web-slinger had on artist Humberto Ramos.

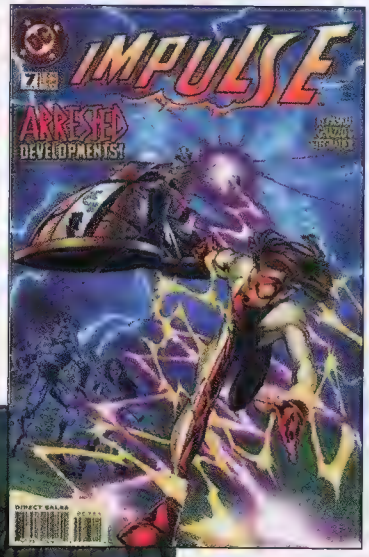
"The first comics I ever read were with Spider-Man," recalls the 24-year-old Mexico City artist. "I wanted to be a scientist after reading Spider-Man. Finally, I decided that if I could not be a superhero like Spider-Man then maybe I could draw superheroes for a living."

Ramos has made that last bit of business a reality as one of the up-and-coming lights on Milestone Media's *Hardware*, along with DC's *Impulse* and *Superboy*, among others. And the soft-spoken creator claims he's done it with tools that are not that special.

"I really don't think my drawing style is that amazing," he confesses. "I've always tried for a commercial style and I guess a lot of people have liked it."

Ramos was always around comics (*Amazing Spider-Man*, *The Avengers* and *Spider-Woman* among others) and cartoon characters (Rocky and Bullwinkle, Underdog and Speed Racer) while growing up in Mexico City. A self-described "good student who studied a lot," Ramos was rarely without a pencil in hand. "I used to sit in front of the TV and draw the characters I was watching."

Initially interested in being either a firefighter or bullfighter, his talents as an artist were encouraged in high school and he made graphic design his major in college. "But one day I met a guy who worked for a comic book company in Mexico and I ended up working on a police book called *The Red Beast*. I also did the Mexican edition of *The Flintstones* comics. Then I met another artist who told me about the San Diego Comic Con and I decided to go and see if my work could make the big market."



Ramos' first convention experience was a tough one. "I didn't know anything about portfolios or how to submit to the companies. I received some rough criticism."

He licked his wounds, returned to Mexico and got his portfolio chops together while working on another Mexican title called *Nemesis*. He returned to San Diego the next year. "I contacted the guys at Milestone Media and they said, 'Don't go with anybody else. We're interested in your work but we want to see more. So I returned to Mexico and sent them some more samples."

Milestone eventually rang Ramos up and the result was a crack at a DC book. Seven issues of *Hardware* followed in short order by *Superboy* #9-#10 for DC and his current gig on *Impulse* which strikes a particular chord with Ramos. "The other superheroes are all right but they are always so serious. I like Impulse because he's a fun guy, a party guy."

Besides *Impulse*, Ramos has also contributed trading card art for Gen13, The Maxx and Avengelyne cards to an upcoming Image set and adds that "there will be an *X-Nation 2099* book coming up in January for Marvel. I will also continue to do *Impulse*." He likens his *Impulse* work as his best to date and speculates that his dream project would most likely be an all-star lineup. "Spider-Man would definitely be it. I'd like to work on it with Mark Waid or Walter Simonson but I don't know if that is possible."

On his career, Ramos—who is very religious—claims luck has had nothing to do with it. "God has helped me a lot. He took my hand and has led me down this road."

Ramos' wide-eyed fun-lovin' depiction of Impulse.

Marc Shapiro, who wrote last month's "Halloween Knight," ran up the biggest phone bill of his career with this feature.

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SPIDER-MAN'S SWINGIN' FUN PLACE

EASY READER, THAT'S MY NAME. HMM. HMM. HMMMM. READIN', READIN', THAT'S MY GAME. I TELL YA. HMM. HMM. HMMMM.

HEY, YOU GROOVY CATS, WELCOME TO THE HAPPENIN' ***SPIDEY FUN SECTION***! YOU MIGHT REMEMBER ME FROM SPIDEY SUPER STORIES AND "THE ELECTRIC COMPANY," BUT MAYBE YOU DON'T. Y'SEE, THE MAN SHUT 'EM BOTH DOWN. BUT NO ONE KEEPS ME DOWN, AND I'M HERE TO STAY, Y'DIG?

Easy Reader says, "This comic book is easy to read!"

DIG IT, A WORD SEARCH! ALL OF THE WORDS ON THAT FAR-OUT LIST ARE HIDDEN IN THIS JUMBLE THANG. YOU SWINGIN' HEPCATS NEED TO LOOK FORWARD, BACKWARD, DIAGONAL AND EVEN UPSIDE DOWN TO FIND 'EM.

WORD SEARCH

FIND THESE

A GUY NAMED JOE
AUNT MAY
BLACK CAT
ELECTRIC COMPANY
ESU
GWEN STACY
HAMMERHEAD
(NED) LEEDS
MARY JANE
MS LION
NEW WARRIORS
PUMA
RHINO
RINGMASTER
SCARLET SPIDER
SHOCKER
SPIDER-MAN
UNCLE BEN
(BEN) URICH
WEBS

N	P	U	M	A	Y	A	M	T	N	U	A	B	L	A	C	K	C	O	H
A	C	A	P	U	N	C	L	E	O	J	D	E	M	A	N	Y	U	G	A
M	G	W	E	N	S	T	A	C	I	E	N	A	J	Y	R	A	M	N	M
R	B	L	A	C	K	C	A	T	L	E	I	L	L	A	B	E	W	E	M
E	R	S	C	A	R	L	E	T	S	P	I	D	E	R	X	E	A	B	E
D	S	H	O	C	K	E	R	U	M	N	R	A	J	E	B	D	T	E	R
I	U	C	I	W	H	W	E	B	E	L	E	C	T	S	D	Z	H	L	H
P	H	I	L	N	S	R	O	I	R	R	A	W	W	E	N	S	A	C	E
S	W	R	I	B	O	K	R	E	T	S	A	M	G	N	I	R	U	N	A
A	G	U	Y	N	A	P	M	O	C	C	I	R	T	C	E	L	E	U	D

CBIQ

COMIC BOOK INTELLIGENCE QUOTIENT

SCORE	RANK
0-5	Get lost, Poindexter, you're in Squaresville.
6-12	Sweet moves, sugar baby, you're the king of swing.
13-19	Move to the groove, daddy-o—you're the BMOC!
20	Dig it, funky momma, you're the cat's pajamas!

HEY, DADDY-O, IT'S TIME TO TEST ALL THE FAR-OUT KNOWLEDGE LOCKED IN THAT SWINGIN' HEPCAT BRAIN OF YOURS. IT'S THE GROOVY, ALL-VISUAL SPIDER-MAN CBIQ! AND DID WE TELL YOU WE'LL BE GRADIN' YOU? HEY, KEEP COOL, PUSSYCAT! WE JUST WANNA SEE WHO THE EGGHEADS ARE AND WHO'S A CHUMP.

Easy Reader says, "This comic book is easy to read!"

1) Who was Carnage's one-time cellmate?

A

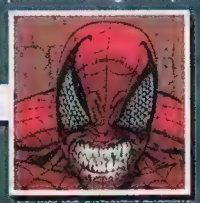
B

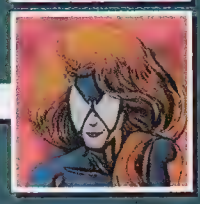
C

D

2) Which of the following villains was dipped into a steamy chemical bath, turned into a giant spider, went loony, then jumped off a building and exploded?

A

B 

C 

D

3) Who was behind the "resurrection" of Peter Parker's parents?

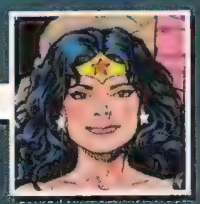
A

B

C

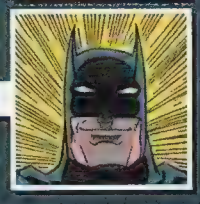
D

4) Which of the following characters hasn't Spider-Man teamed up with?

A 

B

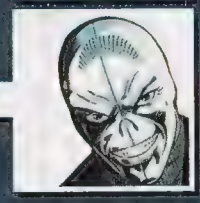
C

D 

5) Who was the first supervillain Spidey ever faced?

A

B

C 

D

CBIQ

COMIC B[illegible]K
INTELLI[illegible]
QUOTI[illegible]

6) Which is the real inscription on Aunt May's tombstone?

A

B

C

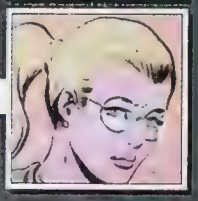
D

7) Peter Parker was never in a romantic relationship with:

A

B

C

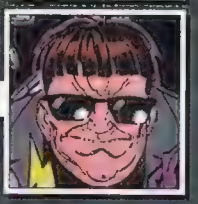
D


8) What supervillain did Aunt May almost marry?

A

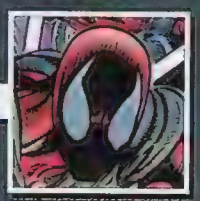
B

C

D


9) What was the single worst Spider-Man storyline to date?

A

B


C

D

10) Who befriended Peter Parker when Petey was out wandering through America thinking he was the clone?

A

B

C

D

11) Which of the following supervillains has not been killed and replaced?

A

B

C

D

12) What supervillain did J. Jonah Jameson *not* have a hand in creating?

A

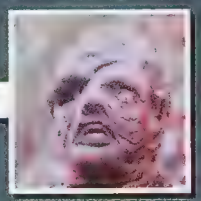
B

C

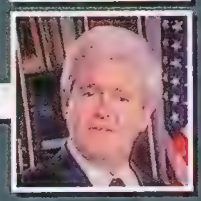
D

All photos courtesy Everett Collection

13) Gee, with Spidey having radioactive blood and all, Mary Jane's baby will probably end up looking like:


A

B


C

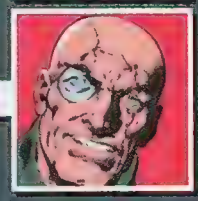
D

14) Who was the very unpleasant supervillain behind the AssassiNation Plot from *Amazing Spidey #320-#325*?

A

B

C


D

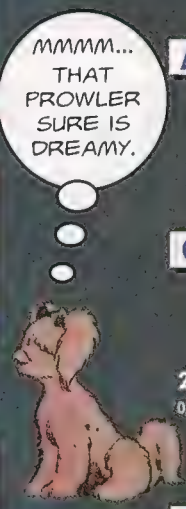
15) Flash Thompson was once framed so it looked like he was what supervillain?

A

B

C

D

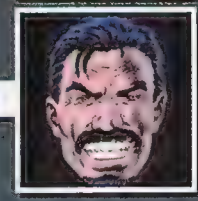


16) Who killed Kraven the Hunter?

A

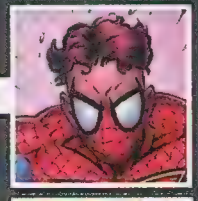
B

C


D

17) Which of the following utterly ridiculous Spider-Men was the first to exist?

A


B

C

D

18) In which of the following shots is Peter Parker smiling?

A

B

C

D

19) Eddie Brock's mis-reporting on what supervillain cost him his job?

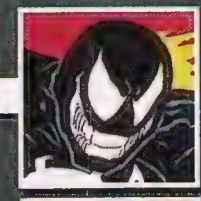
A

B

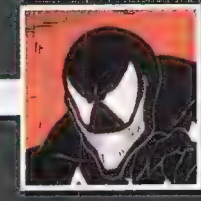
C

D

20) Which of the following facial expressions would follow Venom sitting on a toilet when someone's left the seat up (and the water's reeeeal cold)?

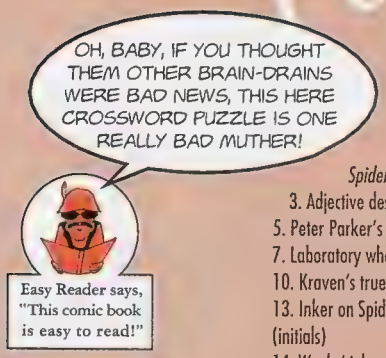

A

B


C

D

CROSSWORD PUZZLE



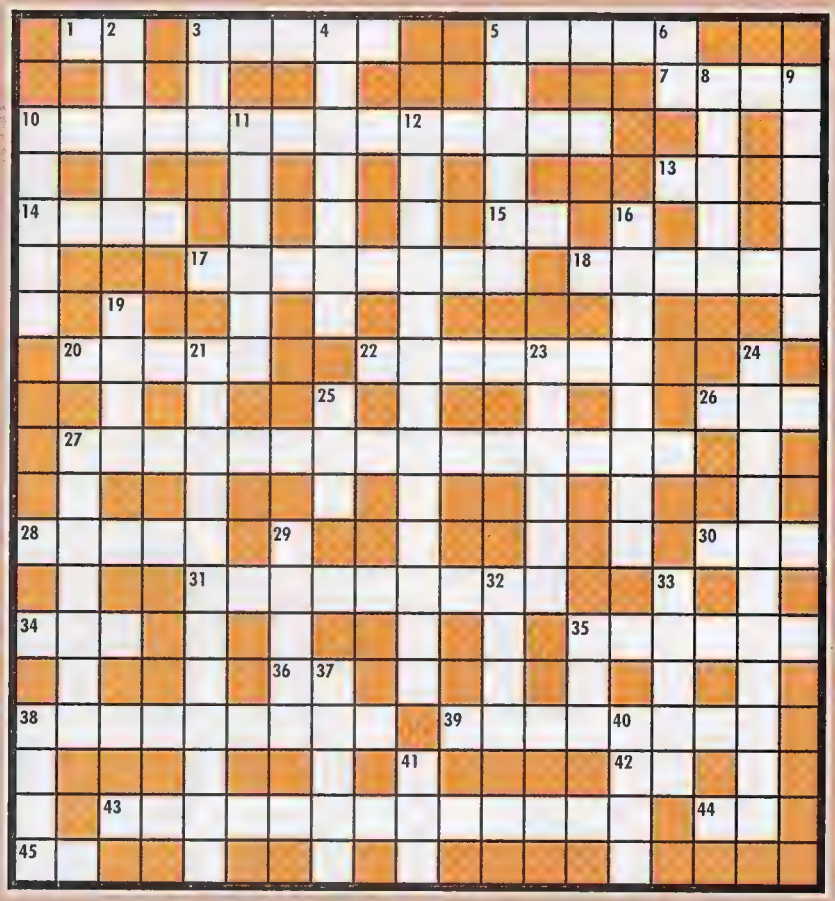
ACROSS

1. Just a guy who gained superpowers in *Amazing Spider-Man* #38 (initials)
3. Adjective describing Dan of the Enforcers
5. Peter Parker's high school principal
7. Laboratory where the spider got irradiated (abbreviation)
10. Kraven's true name
13. Inker on Spider-Man's origin story in *Spectacular Spider-Man* #1 (initials)
14. Weeks' job was to do this at the funeral of Ben Parker
15. Acrobat member of the Circus of Crime (initials)
17. The killer responsible for the death of Peter Parker's parents
18. The Kingpin of Crime
20. Weapons of choice for Xandu and Watoomb
22. Handicap of Dr. Curt Connors
26. What the Green Goblin caused Gwen Stacy to do
27. Traditional meeting place of Spider-Man and the Human Torch
28. Secret identity originally belonging to Frederick Foswell, not Wolverine
30. Harry Osborn's one-time drug of choice (abbreviation)
31. Liz Allan's step-brother
34. Villainous creation of the brother of 38 across
35. Spider-Man's last name, according to *Amazing Spider-Man* #1
36. The Looter (initials)
38. Creator of the Scorpion
39. Belonging to Flint Marko, not Morpheus
42. Letterer on *Amazing Fantasy* #15
43. Team Spider-Man attempted to join in *Amazing Spider-Man* #1
44. Big, dumb partner of 3 across
45. Harry Osborn's ex, whose rejection drove him to drugs (first name, initials)

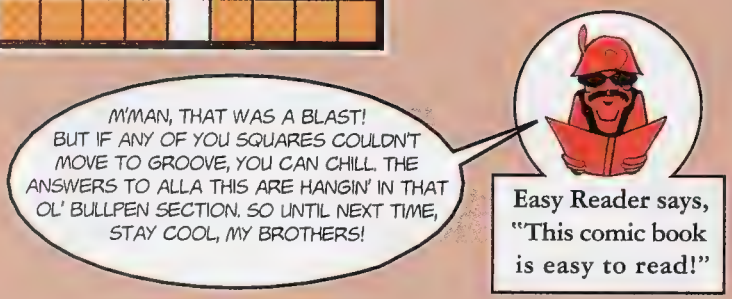
DOWN

2. Lab assistant killed by Peter Parker's chemistry professor
3. Silvio Manfredi's relationship to Spider-Man
4. Dean of Empire State University
5. The second Mysterio
6. Colorist on the first color appearance of the Disruptor
8. Peter Parker and friends were these at the time Ben Parker was killed
9. Real name of 36 across
10. Peter Parker's superhero identity, according to *Amazing Spider-Man* #3: ____man
11. Mike Esposito, Jim Mooney and Frank Giacoia
12. Mechanism by which Spider-Man first defeated William Baker
16. Spider-Man's female amazing friend
19. Psychiatrist of the first Green Goblin's son
21. Cellmate of the burglar who killed Ben Parker
23. Nickname of Spidey creator Stan Lee
24. Doctor Octopus, Electro, Kraven, Mysterio, Sandman and the Vulture
25. *Daily Bugle* reporter who wrote Gwen Stacy's obituary
27. The third Vulture
29. Creation of Professor Miles Warren
32. Aunt of 45 across
33. Dr. Turner's relationship to the Chameleon
35. Shared by Peter Parker and Harry Osborn in college
37. Peter Parker's high school nemesis (not Garrick, Allen or West)
38. Nature of Quentin Beck's death in prison following *Amazing Spider-Man* #67
40. Peter Parker's mother
41. Number of limbs possessed by Spider-Man in *Amazing Spider-Man* #100

Crossword by Raymond Brown



Secret clue: Use a pencil



THE WYRM™

Fangthane Bloodjaw looked out over the factory grounds at the sad little pack of Garou who thought they were penetrating the security undetected. He smiled a split-gummed grin. Kills-the-Weak placed a hand on Fangthane's shoulder, careful to avoid the cancerous boils there, and cackled maniacally as the factory's defense fomori burst from their shallow graves beneath the edge of the reactor and began to burn the Garou with their radioactive, acid touch. Oh, yes. This would be a glorious night for the Wyrm indeed.

Taking evil to all-new heights, the **Wyrm** features almost 200 new cards for use with **RAGE**, but with a unique twist. These cards allow you to play Wyrm packs against Gaia's packs of Garou. Band together Black Spiral Dancers, Pentex First Teams, Seventh Generation Covens and Banes to crush the pitiful Garou in their fight to save the Earth. Not for babies, whiners or wuss-bags.

RAGE

The Werewolf: The Apocalypse
Collectible Trading Card Game

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Spinning a new web

IF YOU'RE CONFUSED WITH WHAT'S BEEN GOIN' ON WITH SPIDER-MAN, HERE'S THE STORY UP TILL NOW

By Paul J. Grant

In the beginning, there was one true Spider-Man. His secret identity was Peter Parker, and he lived with his ailing Aunt May in the New York suburb of Forest Hills. He fought the Vulture and Doctor Octopus, worked as a photographer for *The Daily Bugle*, fell in love with Gwen Stacy and lost her, and on more than one occasion observed that with great power there must also come great responsibility.

Then along came Professor Miles Warren, a.k.a. the Jackal, and he turned Peter Parker's life into utter chaos. It was because of Warren that the Spider-Man we've been following for the past 20 years turned out not to be the real Spider-Man. How did that happen? Glad you asked.

Where it All Started

Prof. Warren also loved Gwen Stacy, and he blamed Spider-Man for her death, even though she was actually killed by the original Green Goblin (in the classic *Amazing Spider-Man* #121). Assuming the persona of the Jackal, he first tried to kill Spidey by convincing the Punisher that Spider-Man was a villain. A brilliant biochemist and geneticist who studied under the High Evolutionary at one point (see *Scarlet Spider Unlimited* #1), it was Warren's expertise at cloning that proved to have the most far-reaching effects.

He had obtained DNA samples from Spider-Man and Gwen when she was his student, and proceeded to develop clones of both—a clone of Gwen to restore the subject of his infatuation, and one of Spider-Man as a tool in his revenge against the wall-crawler. And since a clone of Spider-Man can't be "born" with a costume on, it was then that Warren learned Peter Parker was indeed Spider-Man.

Warren attempted to clone Peter a number of times before ultimately achieving success. Problems with degeneration plagued early attempts, and the first clone, who managed to escape, later took on the identity of the misguided Kaine. Eventually Warren succeeded, and in *Amazing Spider-Man* #149-#151, the clone appeared, fought the real Spider-Man, and, along with the Jackal, was seemingly killed in action. The Spider-Man left standing, convinced he was the real deal, disposed of the clone's corpse down a convenient smokestack, and got on with his life—a life that eventually included marriage to Mary Jane Watson, battles with Venom and Carnage, and being drawn by Todd McFarlane.

But all was not as it seemed. In true comic book fashion, neither the Spider-Clone nor the Jackal were truly dead. It was explained that the dead Jackal was merely a clone of Warren, while the real Jackal rescued the Spider-Clone's corpse—who hadn't perished after all. And, better yet, the Spider-Clone wasn't really the clone at all, but the one, true Peter Parker!

And then the Jackal went into hibernation for the next five years (comic book time) only to later re-emerge as a nastier, more powerful nemesis.

The Story of the 'Clone'

The character-formerly-known-as-the-clone, having all of Peter's memories (in retrospect, not that surprising) went back to Peter's apartment, took some money, some costume parts and a high school ring, and then decided to take a bus out of town. He soon decided that even if he was a clone he had a right to existence and adopted the name Ben Reilly—"Ben" after Peter's late Uncle Ben, whose death inspired Spider-Man to become a crimefighter, and "Reilly" after his Aunt May's maiden name.

Ben's travels eventually took him to the small town of Rachel, Vt., where at an inn he first encountered geneticist Seward Trainer. Ben was tired, sick and uncommonly belligerent, but Trainer saw something special in the young man, befriended him and gave him employment as his assistant. Soon Trainer learned that Reilly was no ordinary man, however, when Reilly ripped open a magnetically sealed hatch with his bare hands to get to vital computer data contained therein. Ben explained his whole story to Trainer and the two became close friends.

Wanderlust, however, got the better of Ben Reilly, and he set off on a voyage of self-discovery which took him around the world and eventually to Salt Lake City (as detailed in the *Spider-Man: The Lost Years* mini-series), where he took on a job as a university teaching assistant. Hot on his heels was the mysterious Kaine, who had been dogging Reilly's trail for hundreds of miles and knew that Reilly was the true Peter Parker. Both found love; Reilly with the red-headed waitress Janine Godbe (who, not surprisingly enough, looks like Mary Jane Watson), and Kaine with tough undercover police woman Louise Kennedy. Both women had dark secrets. Janine was actually Elizabeth Tyne, wanted for the murder of her abusive father. Kennedy's hidden side was even darker—she was on the payroll of a local drug lord. When Kaine learned the truth, livid with rage at her betrayal of both him and her role as protector of the public trust, he killed Louise, leaving behind the disfiguring "Mark of Kaine" on her face and his fingerprints on her gun. Since Kaine and Reilly share fingerprints, Kennedy's former partner Jacob Raven believed Reilly to be the murderer. Despite the fact that Ben saved both Jacob's life and that of his son Matt, Jacob dedicated himself to bringing Ben to justice.

Kaine and Ben left town, the latter accompanied by Janine. That relationship didn't last, and what happened to Janine (who Ben now believes is dead) is not yet known.

Throughout all this, Ben kept tabs on Aunt May. Pretending to be a wrong number—and disguising his voice electronically—he had begun a long-term long distance relationship with the woman. When he learned that she had suffered a stroke and was in a coma, Reilly left his new life in the Pacific Northwest and rode

Ben reassured Peter that he wanted no part of Peter's life, but it immediately became clear that this really wasn't feasible, as both men were drawn into the machinations of the enigmatic Judas Traveller at the Ravencroft Asylum. After that, against his will but with an almost palpable sense of the inevitable, Ben took mask, web-shooters and torn sweatshirt in hand and became the costumed crimefighter whom *The Daily Bugle*—much to Ben's chagrin—dubbed the Scarlet Spider (*Web of Spider-Man* #118).

At this point, things began to happen rather furiously. Kaine, reading about the appearance of a new Spider in town, deduced that this must be Reilly, whose trail he had apparently lost some time before. Peter, in the meantime, just as he was regaining his mental equilibrium, was infected with a lethal virus by the Owl. He found an unlikely ally at that point in Doctor Octopus, and together they found a cure. Doctor Octopus surrendered to the police, but on his way to jail he was attacked and killed by Kaine, who had earlier killed Kraven's son, the Grim Hunter, leaving his telltale mark on both their faces. Kaine, you see, had a vision of the future, where Mary Jane lay dead, murdered by hands unknown. So he went around killing Spider-Man's foes on the chance that they might turn out to be the culprit.

Peter had also been having visions—of himself in a cloning tank. He was mysteriously drawn to a secret underground facility in New York's Catskill Mountains, and was soon joined by Ben. They entered the laboratory where the real Jackal, stronger and crazier than before, emerged from his tank. A series of fights and mind games followed, as the Jackal taunted both men with the question of which—if either—of them was the real Peter Parker. Hidden in the shadows, Kaine and Traveller's ally Scrier watched, unseen. Ben and Peter departed, and the Jackal then created yet another Parker-duplicate, whom he sent towards New York believing that he was the real Peter Parker.

Then Aunt May emerged from her coma, and demanded to go home. In *Amazing Spider-Man* #400, she recognized that Mary Jane was pregnant, and told Peter that there is no greater responsibility than raising a child. In a

THE FABULOUS SPIDER-MAN

Mark Bagley fashions a new Spider-Man for Marvel, debuting in *Sensational Spider-Man* #0.

his motorcycle cross-country to New York just to be close to her. This is the point where the supposed clone made his reappearance in the Spider-Man saga, first in a series of strategically mysterious shadowy cameos, and eventually coming face-to-face with Peter Parker in *Web of Spider-Man* #117.

Condition Critical

Peter, at this stage of his life, was in a rather shaky mental condition. He had been stunned to learn that his parents, long-believed dead, were actually alive—and even more stunned when their resurrection turned out to be a hoax masterminded by the Chameleon and the Green Goblin. When he was forced to witness his pseudo-parents' second death, he became withdrawn and less than sure about his own humanity. On the road to recovery, but still less than 100 percent stable, the twin blows of his beloved aunt's stroke and coming face-to-face with his clone rocked Peter Parker's world.

SHE'S TOUGH... SHE'S SEXY... AND SHE'S BACK!

MIKE GRELL

MAGGIE THE CAT

image

RETURNING IN ALL-NEW GLORY JANUARY, 1996

MAGGIE THE CAT™ is trademark and copyright© Mike Grell 1996.

Spider-Man: Why the Change?

***Wizard* caught up with Spider-Man Editor-in-Chief Bob Budiansky to ask him about the recent changes made to Spider-Man.**

Wizard: The old adage goes, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it." Did Marvel consider Spider-Man "broke"?
Budiansky: I don't believe we thought anything was wrong. We just came up with a good story with a real shocking resolution.

Whose idea was it to make the Spider-Clone the real Peter Parker and vice versa?
It was an idea that had many parents, but the original concept was suggested by *Web of Spider-Man* writer Terry Kavanagh. The idea was already in development when I took over as Spider-Man editor, and I gave the final stamp of approval.

Are you happy with the way the project has worked out to date?
Overall, yes. It's been a successful storyline for us. We've seen a dramatic increase in the kind of interest generated by the Spider-Man books. People for a long time, although they bought the titles, thought there was a certain predictability about them. This has changed people's perceptions about what to expect. They know that anything can happen now, and everything's up for grabs. Sales are fairly strong in a weakening market.

Aren't many long-time Spider-fans angry about the changes?
I confess, we've gotten a lot of mail and fan reaction saying, "How can you do this?" They don't accept it, but that's to be expected whenever you take dramatic step like this. And even the people who are most annoyed by this turn of events, generally are still interested in what's going on. We don't want to spread hate, and frankly we were concerned about turning off our audience completely. But that hasn't been the case. They want to know what will happen next week, and we hope that once they get past the idea that these things have happened and they read the stories, they will see that we are continuing to produce entertaining, exciting stories full of surprises and interesting characters. There are more shocking revelations to come, so if they're patient and bide their time, there's a lot more fun in store for them.

Why the new costume?
The new costume is a visual statement that this isn't quite the same Spider-Man that Peter Parker was. Here's a guy who hasn't been Spider-Man in five years. He initially even resisted the idea of being Spider-Man again, because that was an identity that someone successfully took over from him. Now that he's back, he wanted to make the job his own. It's like moving into someone else's house and making it your own.

Will Spider-Man's alter-ego ever be "Peter Parker" again?
I really can't say, because I don't want to spoil it for readers. However, I want to point out that, as is the nature of many comic books, none of what is written so far is necessarily the end of the story, so no one should take it that way. It's just the "story until now." ■*PG*

THE MEN WHO WOULD BE SPIDER-MAN

Kaine and the Spider-Clone ...or is that Peter Parker?

touching scene atop the Empire State Building, she confided in Peter that she had actually known for years that he was Spider-Man, and that she was very proud of him. Unfortunately, she suffered a relapse and died soon afterward. Still in mourning, Peter was arrested (at the instigation of Salt Lake cop Jacob Raven) for the murder of Louise Kennedy, since his fingerprints matched those on her gun. Ben Reilly revealed himself to Mary Jane, explained the situation, and offered his help in tracking down the real killer, Kaine.

"The Mark of Kaine" and "The Trial of Peter Parker" storylines set all these events to boil. The various Parkers met in every conceivable permutation. Peter escaped from jail and Ben took his place. The third Parker-duplicate (dubbed Spidercide by the Jackal), was given the power to control his body on the molecular level. Kaine confessed to the murders and Ben was released. But after conducting tests, Seward Trainer (in *Spectacular Spider-Man* #226) revealed that Ben Reilly is the real Peter Parker, and "Peter" is only the clone. Peter didn't take this news well, and in one careless moment, he lashed out at his pregnant wife and then ran away.

A New Spider-Man

The "Maximum Clonage" story followed. Peter, emotionally distraught, was easily manipulated by the Jackal to help him in his plan to kill all non-clones with a deadly virus. Ben had to fight his way through a gaggle of more clones, and Kaine was apparently killed by Spidercide. Peter recovered, and in a battle royale over at the *Bugle*, the plot was foiled, and both Spidercide and the Jackal plunged to their respective deaths. The Jackal, however, left Peter with a going-away present—a preprogrammed compulsion to kill Mary Jane. Only the power of their love (and some help from Ben and the New Warriors) enabled Peter to triumph over that programming.

In a fight with the new Doctor Octopus—who was revealed to be Trainer's daughter Carolyn—Peter suddenly became aware of the risks his life as Spider-Man presented to a father-to-be. So he retired from the costumed life, and offered the job of Spider-Man to Ben—who declined, preferring to remain the Scarlet Spider. However, that decision didn't last long when a mysterious new Scarlet Spider was created by means of high-tech virtual reality. This new Scarlet Spider proved to be villainous in his actions, smearing Ben Reilly's superhero identity.

Finally, in *Sensational Spider-Man* #0, Ben, the real Peter Parker, once again took on the responsibility for which he was destined. With a new costume–designed by *Amazing Spider-Man* artist Mark Bagley–a new potential love interest in neighbor Carrie Bradley, a new job employed at the Daily Grind coffee bar, and new foes and challenges, the original is now back on the streets. And swinging above them.

Just like it was in the beginning. W

Paul Grant's clone wrote the "Urban Renewal" feature on page 56.

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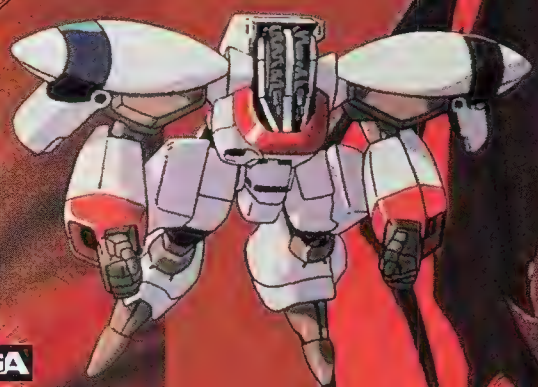

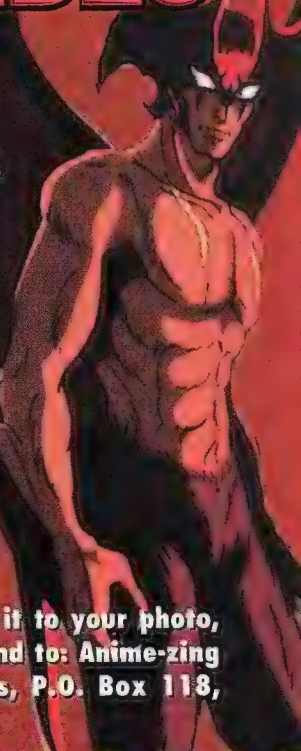

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Sushi or Sashimi?

STAR SEARCH

HAS THE SUPERSTAR ARTIST BEEN REPLACED BY THE 'FLAVOR OF THE MONTH'?

IN 1992,

Todd McFarlane's *Spawn* #1 rocked the comics world, selling 1.5 million copies of a book about a superhero that fans knew nothing about. How did such an unknown entity obliterate its competition? Simply put: Superstar power. Artist/writer Todd McFarlane is an elite talent, i.e., a superstar among artists.

While McFarlane continues to top the charts with *Spawn*, he is now the exception, not the norm among artists. The names that once caused collectors to reach the boiling point seem to be simmering, and new names aren't rocketing into the stratosphere at the same pace. Is the phenomenon of the superstar artist a thing of the past, or is it a cycle that now awaits the next big-name creator to jump-start sales and make everyone talk?

"The recent batch of hot artists seem to have lost much of their fire," says John Byrne, writer/artist on *Wonder Woman*. "But that could be a specific loss of interest, not something symptomatic of the industry as a whole."

Greg Capullo, *Spawn* penciler, agrees. "Nothing's been generated by anyone to the degree that the last batch achieved. That heat isn't around today, but I don't have a crystal ball to say if a new generation will be able to generate that kind of success."

Much of the heat for the last group of superstar artists is credited to the phenomenon of Image Comics. Image was created in 1992 by seven of Marvel Comics' most popular and publicized artists—Erik Larsen, Jim Lee, Rob Liefeld, Todd McFarlane, Whilce Portacio (who bowed out early on for personal reasons), Marc Silvestri and Jim Valentino. It whipped up fan enthusiasm, enticed Marvel fans into buying another publisher's titles, sold millions of comics and generated a "creator as celebrity" mentality at a level never before seen.

The intensity of that fan acclaim may be gone for good, says Silvestri. "Image was a case of the right people in the right place at the right time," he says. "To be honest, I don't think another 'Image' will ever happen again in this industry."

That doesn't mean that there won't always be some artists who can outsell other artists, he adds. "But I don't know whether there will be an artist who can revive a book from the dead. That kind of power may not exist."

Dan Jurgens, writer and penciler on *The Sensational Spider-Man*, argues that hot artists won't ever be gone for good. "You'll always have artists who are more popular than others," he says. "When I was a kid, I noticed when Carmine Infantino took over the art on *Detective Comics* [in 1964], and when Neal Adams drew Batman [in the Batman titles in 1970]."

"The concept of the hot artist isn't fading, but it's taking a different tack," says Paul Kupperberg, who as editor of DC's *Wonder Woman* has worked with two popular artists in a row in Mike Deodato Jr. and Byrne. "Rather than looking at the Flavor of the Month, readers are paying more attention to those who consistently deliver the type of story they are looking for. They see the megastars who shine brightly and disappear, and they see the emperor's not wearing any clothes."

BY CRAIG SHUTT

Fans still pack conventions, but are any of them budding superstar artists?

Death of the Market

The collapse of the speculator market in late 1993 played a large role in the recent cooling down of superstars, most agree. When the speculators—people who didn't know about comics and bought thousands of copies of the latest hot books with popular artists—left the industry, apparently taking many true fans with them, comics sales plummeted. That affected the perception of what "hot" meant, according to *Spawn* writer/artist Todd McFarlane, who has been reigning as comics' most popular artist for arguably the past five years. "A few years ago, when the market was so much bigger, a hot artist could boost sales a few hundred thousand copies to a title," he explains. "Today, hot artists still add the same amount to a book percentage-wise, but the total number is so much smaller."

Ironically, the smaller print runs on today's comics, coupled with retailers' concerns about being overstocked, have created a situation much more suitable to the rise of highly valued comics, says Stephen Platt, artist of Image's *Prophet*, who shot to fast attention with his first comics work on Marvel's faltering *Moon Knight* title in 1993.

"Someone who's really hungry and has a fresh, new look could take over a really low-selling comic and have a chance to explode," he explains. "I think there are a lot of *Moon Knights* out there waiting to happen. And it will be on a book like *Moon Knight*, where no one is paying attention and there are few copies available. True collector's items can't be planned or marketed in advance."

Even more ironic, he suggests, is that new artists focus so hard on trying to be hot that they prevent it from happening. "Everyone figures they'll be hot if they draw the X-Men or Spider-Man or Batman," he says. "They wind up drawing books where they're competing with the ghosts of the greatest artists of the last four or five decades. That's not how you stand out."

The focus by young artists on becoming major angers McFarlane. "Just because a guy is hot doesn't mean he's good and should be imitated," he stresses. "The biggest problem I see in young guys is that they go about things backwards—and they know better, dammit. They only want to draw good so they can be hot. If they would do their job and do good work, they would get hot. Being hot comes as a by-product of doing a lot of good work, not the other way around."

Many creators say today's lack of hot artists comes from new creators mimicking the superstars from three years ago. "We're missing the innovators," says Joe Quesada, co-writer and penciler on *Ash*. "Jim Lee, Todd McFarlane and Rob Liefeld aren't to blame for their clones, but the fact that the Image guys became famous and rich has made others want to draw just like them."

But some say the original stars, along with comics editors, encourage cloning by hiring artists who are influenced heavily by the originals. "The studio set-up at Image and other places encourages clones, because new artists tend to emulate their bosses' style of art," says Platt. "Hopefully, they'll evolve beyond that, because that homogeneity works to the detriment of the industry." But new artists have no incentive to evolve, stresses Jurgens: "The industry isn't looking for new styles at all. Comics editors want to find guys who can draw in that Image style, but those artists haven't figured it out, and it's a pale imitation."

Who's to Blame?

Some say the Image phenomenon, which helped push the superstar phenomenon to its peak, also played a role in cooling it off in two different ways. First, some believe that Marvel felt burned when the Image artists left, since Marvel had promoted them more intently than it had other creators in the past and at the time. When the artists left, both Marvel and DC decided to focus more attention on their company-owned properties, i.e., the characters themselves.

"DC and Marvel both are gun-shy about creating stars who can be stolen away from them right now," says Quesada. "The downside to that is that they lose the opportunity to promote someone who could bring in sales." Jurgens agrees: "DC and Marvel are trying very hard to retain the notion that the characters sell the books. But that's not always the case. If they have quality creators on a book and they're not using that to promote it, they're fools."

But, Byrne points out, "I think the industry was stronger and healthier when it was the product, not the Flavor of the Month artist, that sold. Batman and Superman, as examples, were able to maintain multiple titles each month on the strength of their appeal as characters. The books that are driven by creators show noticeable declines in sales when those creators depart."

"DC and Marvel both are gun-shy about creating stars who can be stolen away from them right now."

—Joe Quesada

DC long has had creator credits on its covers, Kupperberg points out. "There's no putting down the draw of Superman or Batman. They're universal," he says. "But DC always has had great respect for creators and what they can bring to a title." Marvel too has begun using creator credits on some of its covers, notably the Avengers Group books.

"Marvel has always felt the characters are

"The books that are driven by creators show noticeable declines in sales when those creators depart."

—John Byrne

foremost," says John Romita Jr., the artist on *Spider-Man* who has been with Marvel for all of his 19-year career. "If I owned Marvel, I'd promote more artists, because I think it can only help the books. I can understand why the Image guys left, because it was a natural progression for them. Marvel thought it had built-in sales figures and that the artists weren't that important." Ironically, he adds, Marvel just called to ask him for a photo so they could promote him as the new artist on the *Spider-Man* book, a call which he admits surprised him.

Speaking for the X-Men office at Marvel, editor-in-chief Bob Harras says, "We believe we have superstar artists working for us, and we reward them very well in their contracts because we want to show them we value them very much. But the characters are important, too, because without the characters, we wouldn't have an industry. There has to be a mingling of the two."

Marvel promotes its creators in several ways, including sending them to conventions to meet the public, he says. "Everyone has their own point of view as to whether they're being promoted enough, so it's something that has to be addressed on an individual level."

He also says there has been no change in promotional approach since the Image creators left. "Image was a happy fusion of creator and character that were promoted together. We're certainly not told we can't promote someone if we want to. But putting together books isn't about ego. We all want to produce good books for the readers."

Some say the Image start-up also hurt the status of superstars because it took so long for some of the company's books to appear. Since establishing themselves as publishers, the Image artists had to contend with multiple tasks in addition to drawing the comics, therefore creating delays in their comics' release. Also, some of the first Image books that were published—notably Rob Liefeld's *Young-*

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THE DARK SIDE

There aren't many drawbacks to being a superstar. You pick your projects, receive top rates, and have fans lining up for autographs. In fact, superstars sometimes make an impact on the general consumer market, paying dividends to the industry. But not everything is peaches and cream, say some who have been there:

John Byrne: "The greatest frustration of being Number One Dog was that I never felt I deserved it at the time. I am proud of the work I did on the X-Men and the like, but it is vastly inferior to what I am presently producing. If there were any logic in the universe, I would be hot now, having grown and developed as an artist."

Dave Cockrum: "There was a point where I could have had any project I wanted, but I wasn't fast enough to take advantage of it. And superstar status usually goes away and doesn't come back."

George Pérez: "You get prime work offered to you, more than you can handle, and there can be a problem saying no [and staying on schedule]. There's also the danger that once you know your book will sell on your name alone, you start to coast. The need to improve is less pronounced, and it gets hard to compete with yourself."

Stephen Platt: "Being hot is a double-edged sword. There are benefits, but more is expected of you. People look for you to be doing innovative work every time out. And it better be exciting, or they perceive you as a fake. It's real tough. It can happen too fast, and it can go away fast too. How you handle that tells you what you're really about."

Marc Silvestri: "If they don't have the maturity to handle it, they can crumble under the pressure and think that every panel has to be a masterpiece. Or they get a big head, which is worse, because nobody wants to work with them. A lot of people like seeing big names come crashing down."

Barry Windsor-Smith: "There are very few creators in this field of comic books that can be considered superstars. Such creators are not only continuously exciting in their work but they are restless innovators who embody longevity and commitment to the field. I can't think of many people who fit that description, can you?" ■CS

Ingredients for Superstardom

Creators agree that in order for an artist to be popular in the long run, it takes a combination of five key ingredients:

1. Talent. "Fans pick up books with only one thought in their heads," says Joe Quesada. "They open the covers and they say, 'Please, dear God, let it be good.' They have expectations, and you either meet them, surpass them or flunk. That's what matter. Any popularity I have comes from picking good projects, doing the best work I can, and doing it in my own style. If you draw like someone you like, you can ride that wave for a while, but you can never be as good as the original."

There's also a difference between being fan-hot and artist-hot, notes John Romita Jr. "I don't care what the fans are saying about John Byrne, Frank Miller, P. Craig Russell, Mike Mignola and Walt Simonson," he says. "They are the superstars to me. The fans' hot artists often don't have much talent—they're just the Flavor of the Month. I'd love to be the best in the eyes of my peers. Basing your value on your sales or fan appeal is going to hurt you sooner or later."

Showing your influences at an early stage isn't bad if the artist keeps improving, adds Stephen Platt. "To stay on top, an artist has to evolve. Readers like to see a young artist that they've been following grow and improve."

2. Continuity. "My feeling is you have to stay on a book for at least a year, and probably two years, to have an impact," says Greg Capullo. "You have to show some continuity and set up a dependable base so kids know to count on you. This business has some real flakes who move around quickly, and that's to be expected in a creative business. But as a pro, you have to set aside your flakiness and stick to the project."

Todd McFarlane agrees. "People like to chase jackrabbits, but they want to catch the jackrabbit. If you stay in one place, readers can catch you. Then they'll hug you and hold you and love you. If you're running all over, readers stop looking for you. The way to get hot for any length of time is to stay put, do 25 issues of one comic, and do a great job. People will pay attention."

3. Longevity. Guys who sell big today but don't come back tomorrow shouldn't be anybody's role model, McFarlane says. "Any guy who made it big in this industry—and I'm talking historically big—has laid down a body of work that he's known for."

Alex Ross agrees. Acclaimed for his 1994 *Marvels* series, he's staying busy on DC's upcoming *Kingdom Come*, and doing covers and character design for *Kurt Busiek's Astro City*. "This industry has a lot of flakes—and these guys are my friends—who don't see the need to work," he says. "They're still drunk on the power of the last few years. I don't think reality has set in. You have to consistently turn out work or people are going to forget you."

4. The Right Project. To be hot, an artist has to be able to work he magic—whatever that is—on a high-profile project that suits his specific talents. "You have to have a cool character," says McFarlane. "But then you look at what that individual creator adds to it. If Batman was flat, nobody would care who was doing it." At the same time, he adds, the best creators can turn a pretty good character into a great one. "The absolute best artists in this business were not only good, but they added something to the characters they worked on."

That's why guys who want to become hot should stay away from the hot characters, argues Romita. "As long as the character is big, it's hard to tell what's the artist and what's the character," he explains. "I sold X-Men well when I worked on it, but lots of people can sell the X-Men. So it's hard to say those books sell because of the artist."

Says Byrne, "I suspect some titles sell on the strength of the creators, while others, like Spider-Man or Superman, will always sell no matter who does them. And, of course, as with X-Man for me or Spider-Man for McFarlane, sometimes it is the characters that create the superstar." And, Jurgens points out, even Superman had his fallow period before the right creative team produced the Death of Superman storyline.

5. Promotion. "Being hot is half due to talent and half due to the effort put into promoting the creator," says Romita. "To be a superstar, you've got to have a real talent for promoting yourself. If John Buscema had Todd McFarlane's ambition, he could be hot again."

Wizard and other comics magazines play a role in promoting creators to hot status, some say. Platt attributes part of his early success to his cover for *Wizard* #35. Adds Byrne, "I think, if anything, it's easier today to become hot. As Marvel and Image have demonstrated, sometimes it requires nothing more than saying an artist is hot in sufficient advertising."

The magazines need hot artists to sell copies, adds Quesada. "If John Byrne is being interviewed, the magazine wants John Byrne to be a star or else nobody cares," he points out. "It's in their interest to prolong stardom and also search out and latch onto new guys who may become big."

Some say that Top Ten lists, at least, are meaningless in generating real heat. "I'm amazed at how much the new artists focus on those lists," says McFarlane. "They think if they're on the list, they're good. But there are people on those lists that aren't that good, including me." ■CS

blood #1, which even he disowns today—weren't as good as the fans were expecting from their highly touted stars.

"The Image guys abused the readers' hospitality," says Dave Cockrum, who rose to prominence drawing the new X-Men in 1975. "They overdid it and offended a lot of people."

Byrne agrees. "Certainly, the superstar-without-product left some kind of a scar on the industry. What kind and how deep remains to be seen."

McFarlane, for one, thinks all of the publishers share the blame for leaving fans feeling burned by comics that didn't live up to their hype. "The finger can't be pointed at any one company," he states. "All of the companies were involved; it was happening industry-wide."

The History of the Superstar Artist

Historically, at a time when comics were a very small industry with precious little promotion, artist Jack Kirby was at the top of the field throughout the 1960s. Revered for establishing the Marvel Comics "style" throughout the 1960s, Kirby could be touted as the first bonafide "superstar." He created the visuals for most of Marvel's early superheroes and drew a host of its titles; when he left to work for DC Comics in 1970, DC launched an ad campaign proclaiming "Kirby is Coming." But Kirby's superstardom was downplayed because the readership was not very large compared with today's.

"We're kidding ourselves if we think superstar status can be sustained for any significant time."

—Dan Jurgens

Others suggest that Neal Adams began the superstar concept with his work on Batman in 1970 and then *Green Lantern/Green Arrow* in the same year. Adams' more realistic and dynamic drawing style was such a departure from the style of the day that the name "Neal Adams" was just as important as the comics and characters he worked on. But with no comic stores or glossy comics magazines around, his impact wasn't as dramatic as it would be today.

It would be seven years until another big name would pop up. With the growth of comic shops and fandom in the 1970s, many point to John Byrne's 1977 ascendancy on the fan-favorite *Uncanny X-Men* as the first time a "superstar" was born. Byrne, with his ultra-clean style of drawing, helped bring the book to the top of the charts and stayed on the book for four years, bringing much artistic consistency to the hot title.

Byrne himself has often said that he traded the "number one artist" slot a few times with Frank Miller during the early-to-mid-'80s, thanks to Miller's groundbreaking *Daredevil* run and *Batman: The Dark Knight Returns*. Miller brought in influences from Japanese comics like *Lone Wolf and Cub*, which contributed to his dynamic figure poses.

And there would be others throughout the '80s and into the '90s. George Pérez on *The New Teen Titans*. Walt Simonson on *Thor*. And then along came McFarlane, Lee and Liefeld, who entered the field at its latest and largest growth expansion in readership.

And now readers are poised for the next wave of talent and where it will come from.

"I'm still waiting to see what the next phase will be after the precedent set by the Image guys, and who will be hot, and who isn't a clone of what's already out there," Pérez says. "I'm eager to see if there's a new Todd McFarlane or Frank Miller or John Byrne."

Is There a Future?

But *will* there be a new one? Is the superstar-artist phenomenon a fad that's gone for good? "The concept of hyping hot artists is still there," McFarlane claims. "But readers have heard it before, and they aren't believing the hype. They've been burned a few times—a lot of times, actually—so now they're waiting longer to see what happens."

Being hot in today's market depends on whether you want to be hot for a month or for a lifetime, creators say. "In my opinion," says veteran artist Barry Windsor-Smith, "any superstar artist or writer got to that vaunted position by not being the Flavor of the Month." Kupperberg agrees. "The real stars are there for the long haul and have consistently turned out interesting work up to their full potential."

"Some artists have 'Flavor of the Month' written all over them. You know they won't be popular in six months."

—Marc Silvestri

And what of former hot artists? Is it possible for them to get hot again? Most creators say maybe—if the artist brings something new to the right project. "Any artist who continues to challenge himself, takes over an interesting project and adds ferocity to it, can create real fire," says Platt. Silvestri adds, "If an artist reinvents himself, he can gain the readers' attention. But if he's doing the same old [stuff], the readers will know it, and it won't change anything."

Jurgens has a more skeptical view. "We're kidding ourselves if we think superstar status can be sustained for any significant time," he maintains. "This industry is extremely cruel to its work force as it ages. Everyone falls out of favor. The arts in general are like that."

Even so, says Pérez, every comic is someone's first. "There are so many opportunities to introduce yourself to new readers who don't know your work," he explains. He likes to tell about the Marvel fan who hadn't seen his art until he drew *The Infinity Gauntlet* in 1991. "He was impressed," he laughs. "He told me I could be the next Todd McFarlane."

Perhaps the best possibility for future hot

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-Wired

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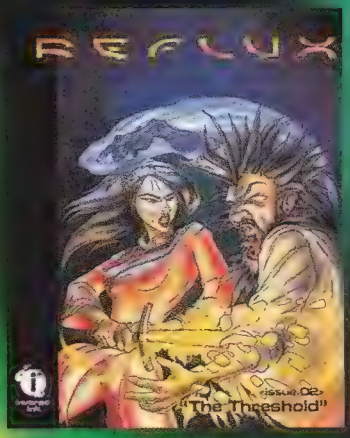

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"If John Buscema had Todd McFarlane's publicist, he could be hot again."

—John Romita Jr.

stars will come from the new breed of self-publishers, suggests Quesada, who is publishing his own *Ash* comic through his company Event Comics. "We're going to see superstar publishers, rather than hot creators who work for other publishers," he predicts. "There's a growing dislike of the big corporate publishers, and individual creator-owned stuff is getting more attention. Readers can sense the love that goes into the work, and they see that the creators are getting better issue by issue." Another plus is that fans of creator-owned comics don't have to worry about the artist hopping among projects, he notes. "Readers can see the personal nature of the work."

Wherever they come from, hot artists could return if conditions are right, most say. "Publishers might feel differently, but the market will always recognize some artists over others," says Jurgens. "That's always happened to one degree or another and always will." Platt agrees. "We're going to have new names. It'd be boring if we didn't. Visual diversity and new styles are enjoyable to find, and they should be encouraged."

But will the market conditions that rocketed earlier creators to superstardom still exist? That's a question that will be determined by the comics readers themselves, because in the end, the fan crowns the superstar. W

Craig Shutt, who interviewed Paul Smith in Wizard #50, fervently admires the work of many ice-cold artists.

CATCH A RISING STAR

Who will be the next Todd McFarlane? The next John Byrne? *Wizard* rated the current crop of artists, tossing in odds on who has the best shot at superstardom.

Alonso

JOE MADUREIRA

J. SCOTT CAMPBELL

Ortega

TOM GRUMMETT

Ortega

CHRIS BACHALO

HUMBERTO RAMOS

GREG CAPULLO

MIKE DEODATO JR.

NAME:	WORK:	ODDS:	THE SKINNY:
1) **Joe Madureira**	*Uncanny X-Men*	5-2	The goldenest of golden boys. Madureira's introduction of Japanese manga influences to the X-Men has opened the eyes of readers and publishers alike. And drawing the X-Men doesn't hurt, either.
2) **J. Scott Campbell**	*Gen*[13]	2-1	An explosive new book (*Gen*[13]) combined with a fresh new talent is the perfect combination for superstardom. Campbell needs another solid year on the book to go to the head of the class.
3) **Tom Grummett**	*Generation X*	4-1	Up till now, Grummett has shown consistency on a monthly basis, but on low-key books such as *Robin* and *Superboy*. An extended stay on *Generation X* could be the springboard Grummett needs to get to the next level.
4) **Chris Bachalo**	*Generation X*	5-1	Bachalo's quirky, sketchy yet dense artistic style has appealed to the X-Men audience as well as the alternative Vertigo audience. His departure from *Generation X* and move to Vertigo's second Death mini-series could shift him away from mainstream comic readers.
5) **Humberto Ramos**	*Impulse*, *X-Nation 2099*	6-1	Name the one young artist that other artists are buzzing about and you have Humberto Ramos. This Mexico City native is on the fast track utilizing his hip style of drawing with stays on *Hardware*, *Impulse* and *X-Nation*.
6) **Greg Capullo**	*Spawn*	8-1	Capullo, by penciling one of the best-selling books (*Spawn*) on a monthly basis, has proven his abilities. However, Capullo may be overshadowed by the media monster that is Todd McFarlane.
7) **Mike Deodato Jr.**	*Avengers*, *Thor*, *Glory*	10-1	While some artists prefer to make their name associated with one book, this Brazilian has managed to juggle multiple projects (*Thor*, *Avengers*, *Glory*), showing a range and ability in both pencil and ink. Deodato is attracting attention but waiting for that breakthrough book to send him soaring.
8) **Kelley Jones**	*Batman*	15-1	Jones has breathed new life into the Dark Knight, and could follow in the footsteps of previous Bat-superstars Neal Adams and Frank Miller. But Jones' innovative, spooky style has earned him a love-it-or-hate-it relationship with Bat-fans.
9) **Adam Hughes**	No current projects	20-1	Hughes just needs that one breakout book to go out on a consistent monthly basis in order to solidify his status. Could that book have been *Ghost*, which Hughes recently left?
10) **Mike Wieringo**	*Robin*	75-1	Wieringo brings a solid happiness to any assignment he takes on. He gave *Flash* a distinct look which brought the character to new heights last year, and he's doing the same to *Robin*. Wieringo's also got great buzz with the fans.

KELLEY JONES

Ortega

ADAM HUGHES

MIKE WIERINGO

THE HOTTEST CHARACTER IN COMICS!
THE MOST ANTICIPATED BOOK OF THE YEAR!
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ZERO
TIME TO DIE²
JANUARY '96
FROM
EVENT COMICS
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Chaos! Comics Presents...

The Everything Chaos! Contest

WHAT DO YOU WANT FOR CHRISTMAS AMERICAN MALE? *YOUR LIFE OR...*

...EVERYTHING CHAOS! EVER MADE

'Tis the season to be jolly, and we're willing to bet that nothing would make you jollier than the biggest batch of Evil Ernie and Lady Death goodies this side of the Endless Graveyard.

Get into the holiday spirit... Chaos! style.

Yes, it is a Contest.

Here's how:

We want you to take a familiar holiday song (You know, like "Oh, Christmas Tree" or "Jingle Bells") and rewrite it so the lyrics include Evil Ernie, Lady Death, Purgatori and the rest of the Chaos! crowd. Here's an example.

Sam, gimme a bouncy C:
(To the tune of "Rudolph, the Red-Nosed Reindeer")

"Ernie, the psycho killer
Had a very shiny ribcage,
And if you ever saw it
You would surely be enraged.
All of the other psychos
Used to laugh and call him names,
They never let poor Ernie
Join in any megadeath games."

Okay, it's a bad example, but you get the point. Do up your own song—and do it well enough—and we'll arrange for a big fat guy in a red suit to give you...

...the Ultimate Stocking Stuffers

GRAND PRIZE (1):

One reader will receive one of everything Chaos! That's right, kemosabe. You'll get one copy each of *every* Chaos! comic, trade paperback, hardcover, trading card, poster, Christmas ornament and whatever else we can lay our grubby paws on. You'll be up to your left clavicle with Evil Ernie and Lady Death, which ain't a bad place to be. Trust us.

And as an extra-special bonus from our friends over at Chaos!, just because they love their fans so much, you'll even get special goodies available nowhere else—the tools of the trade. You'll get Steven Hughes' pencils which he actually used to draw comics! You'll get Jason Jensen's pens he used for inking! You'll get half a bag of Fritos that Brian Pulido couldn't finish when he was writing! Now *that's* cool! And salty!

This contest is sponsored by Chaos! Comics, a bunch of people who believe in the spirit of giving.

Fill this sucker out, attach it to your song, put it an envelope and send to: Everything Chaos Contest, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118.

Chaotic! Legal Print

No purchase necessary. Contest is open to anyone except employees of Wizard Press, Chaos! Comics and their immediate families or Richard Nixon. He was a little too much into order. Print your name, date of birth, address, city, state, zip code and telephone number with area code on the official entry form or a 3-by-5 inch index card and attach it to your entry. Enter as many times as you like. Mail each entry separately to: Everything Chaos! Contest, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118. No mechanical reproductions of completed forms are accepted but you can photocopy the entry form before filling it out if you don't want to mess up your magazine. All entries become property of Wizard Press and none will be returned. All taxes (federal, state and local, if any) will be the responsibility of the prize winner. No cash equivalent or substitute prizes will be offered. Prizes are awarded in the name of the contest winner and are not transferable. Offer void where prohibited, regulated or restricted by law in a manner inconsistent with the purposes and rules hereof. Ever listen to Bob Dylan's "Subterranean Homesick Blues"? That's definitely chaotic! All entries must be received at contest headquarters by January 31, 1996. Wizard Press is not responsible for lost, late, misdirected or mutilated entries. Odds of winning will be determined by the number of valid entries received prior to the closing date of the contest. Prize winners will be selected based on quality and creativity among all properly completed entries by Wizard Press. Judging will take place on February 15, 1996.

For the name of the winner, available after February 15, 1996, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to: Everything Chaos! Winners, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118.

Official Everything Chaos! Entry Form

DEADLINE IS JANUARY 31, 1996!

Name _____ Date of Birth _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone Number (with area code) _____

Favorite Reindeer _____
(other than Rudolph)

The 1995 Wizard Fan Awards!

The third annual *Wizard* Fan Awards are upon us yet again, and it's time for comicdom's masses to cast their votes. Who's the best artist or writer? Coolest superhero or villain?

You decide here!

Voting Rules:

• The comic issues eligible for the 1995 *Wizard* Fan Awards are those that were originally released between November 1994 and October 1995. Story arcs, mini-series, TV series, trading card sets and toy lines that began, ended or continued through the time period are all eligible.

• Only vote once in each category: We don't believe you really love "Maximum Clonage" and "Age of Apocalypse" the same; you have to pick one (as in "uno"). Also, you don't have to write in a vote for every category, but we'd really prefer that.

• Only send in one ballot! Anyone caught stuffing the ballot box will be subjected to a mass-mooning by the entire *Wizard* staff. Oh, and their ballots will be ignored.

• Print clearly. If we can't read it, we can't count it. Use a separate piece of paper, or type up your votes, if necessary. Just make sure everything is legible so your vote is counted.

• **All ballots must arrive at our offices by no later than January 15, 1996.** Ballots arriving after this date are fed to Galactus.

• Fill out the ballot (yeah, yeah, you can make a copy) and mail it to:

Wizard 1995 Fan Awards Ballot
c/o Wizard Press
P.O. Box 381
Congers, NY 10920-2064

OR

E-Mail your ballot to WizFanAwds@AOL.Com

Watch for further announcements in *Wizard* about where and when we'll announce the winners.

BALLOTS DUE BY JAN. 15, 1996!

Wizard 1995 Fan Awards Ballot

(Print neatly or we'll pee on your X-books)

Creators:

Favorite Writer _____

Favorite Penciler _____

Favorite Inker _____

Favorite Colorist _____

Favorite Letterer _____

Favorite Editor _____

Favorite Cover Artist _____

Favorite Painter _____

Characters:

Favorite Hero _____

Favorite Heroine _____

Favorite Villain _____

Favorite Villainess _____

Favorite Supporting Character (Male) _____

Favorite Supporting Character (Female) _____

Most Improved Character (Male) _____

Most Improved Character (Female) _____

Character Most Deserving of His/Her/Its Own Ongoing Title _____

Products:

Favorite Publisher _____

Favorite Single Issue _____

Favorite Story Arc (two or more issues) _____

Favorite Ongoing Title _____

Most Improved Ongoing Title _____

Favorite Cover _____

Favorite One-Shot or Miniseries _____

Favorite Graphic Novel, Trade Paperback or Hardcover _____

Favorite Trading Card Series or Set (non-sports, no CCG's) _____

Favorite Toy Line (industry-related) _____

Favorite TV Show—Live Action (industry-related) _____

Favorite TV Show—Cartoon (industry-related) _____

Favorite Feature Film (industry-related) _____

I hereby certify these answers are my own and no one promised me original art in order to garner my vote:

Signature _____

Name: _____

Address: _____ Age: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

WHAT'S THIS? A WHOPPIN'
123 PRIZES IN ONE CONTEST?!?
WE MUST BE OUT OF OUR FRIGGIN' SKULLS!

YEAH, **WE ARE.**

The Creed Superhero Contest

You know Creed, don'tcha? He's that dreamworld fantasy kid with the big honkin' hairdo, whose exciting adventures are written and drawn by young up-and-comer Trent Kaniuga. Well, Lightning Comics and Trent want you to have a page right out of the brand-spankin'-new Creed #1.

This is what you gotta do:

Two things we know about Creed: **ONE**, he talks to frogs. **TWO**, he's anything but a superhero. So we got to thinking, and decided that we'd like you to show us what Creed would look like if he actually were a superhero. So draw us a pretty picture, giving us any and all of the standard superhero goodies. Maybe a cape. Maybe big boots. Maybe epaulets (look it up). Be creative. Be funny. Be serious. Be all of the above. We don't care, just do it! Do it 'cause you could win some super-cool goodies!

The Super-Cool Goodies:

Grand Prize (23):

That's right! We're a-gonna have 23 Grand Prize winners! Each Grand Prize winner will receive one page of original Trent Kaniuga art from the full-color *Creed* #1 (Lightning's ongoing series)!

Second Prize (100): One hundred winners will get a copy of the full-color *Creed* #1 (ongoing series) autographed by Trent Kaniuga! That's a hundred winners, folks!

This contest is sponsored by Lightning Comics, and they've got the sizzle.

Fill this sucker out, attach it to your entry, put it in an envelope and send it to:

Creed Superhero Contest, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118.

The Legal Dimension

No purchase necessary. Contest is open to anyone except employees of Wizard Press, Lightning Comics and their immediate families or any dragons, frogs, or frogs who become dragons. Scaly things need not apply. Print your name, date of birth, address, city, state, zip and telephone number with area code on the official entry form or a 3-by-5-inch index card and attach the form or card to your entry. Enter as many times as you like. Mail each entry separately to: Creed Superhero Contest, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118. No mechanical reproductions of completed forms are accepted, but you can photocopy the entry form before filling it out if you don't want to mess up your magazine. All entries become property of Wizard Press and none will be returned. All taxes (federal, state and local, if any) will be the responsibility of the prize winners. No cash equivalent or substitute prizes will be offered. Prizes are awarded in the names of the contest winners and are not transferable. Offer void where prohibited, regulated or restricted by law in a manner inconsistent with the purposes and rules hereof. Hey! This Creed is a hippie-looking kid. How do you think he feels about Jerry Garcia's untimely demise? **All entries must be received at contest headquarters by January 31, 1996.** Wizard Press is not responsible for lost, late, misdirected or mutilated entries. Odds of winning will be determined by the number of valid entries received prior to the closing date of the contest. Prize winners will be selected based on originality, quality and creativity from all properly completed entries by Wizard Press.

For a (long) list of winners, available after February 15, 1996, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to: Creed Superhero Winners, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118.

DEADLINE IS JANUARY 31, 1996!

So hurry, and good luck.

Official Creed Superhero Entry Form

Name _____ Date of Birth _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone Number (with area code) _____

Did you attach your art? Huh, did ya?

THE BIG 10

TEN EVENTS THAT ROCKED THE COMIC WORLD IN 1995

COMICS GO HOLLYWOOD

"BATMAN'S IN A COMIC BOOK?"

This question, posed by a youngster at a recent comics convention, was relayed by artist Steve Lieber before a bemused panel.

For sure, outside media—film and television—brought comics to a new audience in 1995. But this unfortunately can be seen as a double-edged sword.

"It exposes the characters to the public, but since it can do so well or so badly, that exposure isn't necessarily going to be helpful or hurtful," says writer Kurt Busiek.

"Modern comics are competing with movies, and we're losing out," says artist/writer Norm Breyfogle.

Other films lost out to Batman in 1995. "Batman Forever" repeated the feats of the first two Batfilms, setting opening weekend records and finishing as the top movie of the year with more than $183 million. Director Joel Schumacher already announced plans for the next Batflick in 1997.

On the flop side, "Tank Girl," starring Lori Petty, tanked in the spring, and "Judge Dredd," starring Sylvester Stallone, was swallowed up by the summer competition. By year's end, DC canceled both of its *Judge Dredd* books.

For Marvel, it was another frustrating year. A planned Spider-Man film remains tied up in litigation, and a satisfactory X-Men script is still in progress. Marvel Films chairman Stan Lee vows that in 18 months you'll see Marvel films—and they'll be good.

Dark Horse, which scored hits in 1994 with "The Mask" and "TimeCop," put "Baywatch" 's Pamela Lee into the role of "Barb Wire." "The Crow: City of Angels," a sequel to 1994's "The Crow," began filming in October with Vincent Perez starring, and a "Spawn" movie has also gotten underway. Tommy Lee Jones and Will Smith signed for Malibu's "Men in Black," to begin production early in '96.

On television, "Lois and Clark: The New Adventures of Superman" beat "seaQuest DSV" in the ratings and started its third season on ABC with the revelation that Lois knows Clark is Superman. Sources say that

A BUSY YEAR AT THE BOX OFFICE WITH SUCH MOVIES AS "THE MASK" (LOWER OPPOSITE), "TANK GIRL" (LEFT) AND "BATMAN FOREVER" (BELOW).

Lois and Clark will not be married in the comics until they are married on the show.

"That's like the tail wagging the dog," says *Superman* artist Ron Frenz. "But DC's in a position where it has a national television show to promote the event, and who's going to pass that up?"

Weekend mornings are television's new battleground, with superheroes at the forefront. UPN and KidsWB joined the fray, which is now so crowded it extends to Sundays.

"I don't think there are too many cartoons out there," says Malibu President Scott Rosenberg. "Clearly, a couple of them won't work out—that always happens in television. I think it helps the comics. People want to see what's going to happen next, and there's always stuff in the comics that does not happen on television."

"X-Men" and "Spider-Man" continue to rule Saturday mornings for Fox, and the revamped Fantastic Four and Iron Man met more critical acceptance as part of the syndicated "Marvel Action Universe." Malibu's "UltraForce" began in syndication in October.

"The Adventures of Batman and Robin" is in permanent weekday reruns on Fox after the last five of 85 episodes were shown for the first time in September. A Superman animated series is in the works, and talks are just beginning for a series of straight-to-video animated films starring DC heroes.

WildStorm has a head-start in the video chase, with "Gen13" in production.

"WildC.A.T.s" was canceled by CBS, but moved to the USA Network, where it was joined by "The Savage Dragon." Sam Kieth's The Maxx was a hit on MTV's "Oddities," "The Mask" started briskly over at CBS and Todd McFarlane began preparing an animated "Spawn" for HBO. ■ *Rob Allstetter*

THE PRICE CRUNCH:

Paper Pushes Cover Prices Up

ARE COMICS SALES DECLINING? Yes, say retailers—and blame it on skyrocketing cover prices. Are cover prices increasing? Yes, admit publishers—and blame it on the skyrocketing cost of paper.

Paper prices have been rising steeply the past two years, with the biggest increases on paper traditionally used for comics.

As a result, both DC and Marvel moved to better grades of paper for many of their top line titles, including the Superman and mutant lines. Both companies raised prices significantly—the Superman titles are now priced at $1.95; they were $1.50 in January.

According to retailers, comics readers are reacting to the price increases.

"Marginal titles are more severely hurt by price increases," says Atlanta retailer Cliff Biggers. "Readers of those books seem to be subconsciously looking for a reason to drop the titles, and a price hike is a very good reason."

Don Thore, whose shop is located in Hopewell, Va., said it may be months before retailers can react to declining sales on a title. "The customer rarely puts the books back after getting the sticker shock," he says. "Instead, they decide to cut titles on the next visit, so it may be months after a price rise before the title's sales drop is registered."

Though prices were relatively stable over the second half of 1995, the publishers warn that the upward spiral may not be over. "It's my feeling that the rise in paper costs has to slow over the next six months to a year," says DC's Executive Director-Production, Bob Rozakis, "but it will not stop. We have not topped out yet." ■ *Patrick Daniel O'Neill*

1995 RUNDOWN

IF IT HAPPENED IN THE COMIC WORLD OR THE REAL ONE, IT'S HERE

Compiled by Marc Wilkofsky

NOTE: All comics are listed by their ship dates.

JANUARY

3 *The Astonishing X-Men* #1 and *X-Man* #1, the first "Age of Apocalypse" issues

12 Berkeley Breathed announces that his comic strip "Outland" will end in March

13 "Tales from the Crypt: Demon Knight" film released

17 *The X-Files* #1

21 "The X-Files" wins the Golden Globe award for Best Drama Series

• O.J. trial prosecutors give their opening statements

29 49ers win Superbowl XXIX over Chargers, 49-26

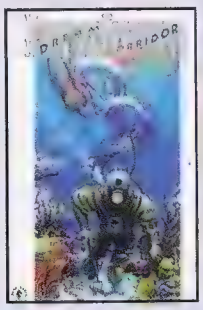
31 *The Power of Shazam!* #1

Jonah Hex: Riders of the Worm & Such #1

• Elektra stars in *Elektra: Root of Evil* #1

• Kabuki debuts in *Kabuki: Circle of Blood* #1

• *Harlan Ellison's Dream Corridor Special* begins the sci-fi anthology series



FEBRUARY

2 Donald Pleasence dies, to live on in terrible *Halloween* films

14 Flash returns with new powers in "Terminal Velocity," part 6, in *Flash* #100

• Aunt May dies, *Amazing Spider-Man* #400

23 Don Heck, legendary comic book artist, dies

28 Impulse gets his own fast-moving series, *Impulse* #1

• Vertigo's *Preacher* begins

• The Mask resurfaces with an ongoing series, *The Mask* #1

• Evil Ernie's main squeeze returns, *Lady Death II* #1

• *Magic: The Gathering—The Shadow Mage* #1, first *Magic: The Gathering* comic from Acclaim/Armada

• *Stray Bullets* #1

MARCH

7 Hal Jordan returns, *Green Arrow* #96

• Damage revealed to be the Golden Age Atom's son, *Damage* #12

• *Ghost in the Shell* #1

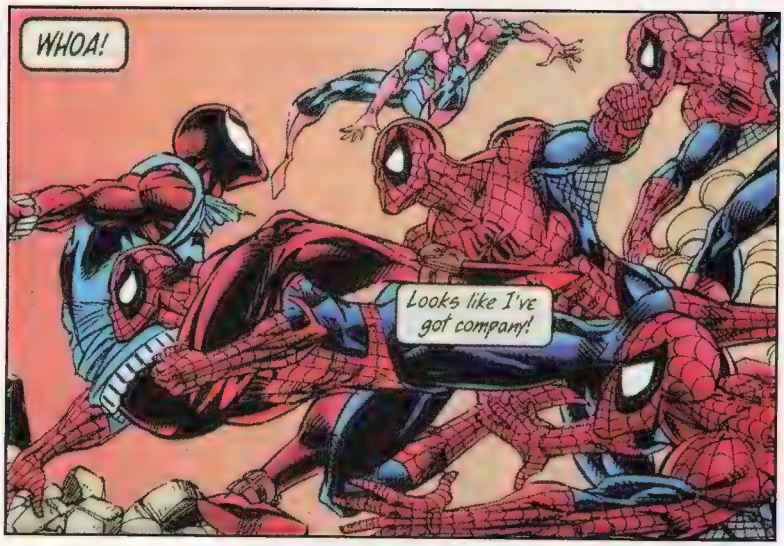
• *Happy Birthday, Martha Washington*

• Governor George Pataki signs into law a measure reinstating the death penalty in New York (probably after reading last week's *Stray Bullets*)

14 *2099 A.D.* #1 ships with the industry's first-ever clear Chromium cover

THE BIG 10

SEND IN THE CLONES



WILL THE REAL SPIDER-MAN PLEASE STAND UP?

The controversial "Maximum Clonage" storyline running through Marvel's Spider-Man titles this summer threw the web-slinger for a loop and gave Spidey fans a wake-up call.

Leading into "Maximum Clonage," Spider-Man Editor-in-Chief Bob Budiansky and his creative teams revealed that Peter Parker, the Spider-Man we've known and loved since 1975, is not the real Peter but a clone of him. Instead, Ben Reilly, the character everyone believed was the Spider-Clone, turned out to be the one, true Spider-Man. (For the complete clone story, see page 106.)

And many comics fans are divided on the story. While many feel betrayed by the turn of events in Spider-lore, most have indicated they enjoyed "Maximum Clonage" and seem positive about where the Spider-Man titles are going.

"We got a fair amount of negative reaction to the Clonage storyline," admits Budiansky, "but the bottom line is Spider-Man is hot. Sales are way up and fan mail on the Spider-Man books is up tenfold."

As far as Spider-Man's future is concerned, Budiansky indicates that only one man will continue as Spider-Man. With Peter Parker and Mary Jane moving to Portland, Ore., to settle down in the mini-series *Spider-Man: The Final Adventure*, it would appear that Ben Reilly will resume where he left off in 1975 as the one true Spider-Man. But don't bank on it, hints Budiansky. "There's more to the story than what we've told so far." ■ *Christopher Griffen*

COMICS GO ONLINE

CHECK YOUR E-MAIL. There may be a personal letter there from James Robinson, Jim Lee, Tom Lyle or Peter David.

What's that? You don't have e-mail and you're not online? You call yourself a comic fan?

These days Wolverine's claws seem dull compared to the cutting edge of online advances. Everybody and their comic books are logging in daily to get the latest news, the juiciest gossip and the coolest free downloads of images.

Plugged-in comic fans are being courted by online services including America Online, CompuServe, Prodigy and the new kid on the cyber block, Microsoft Network.

There's a reason why most publishers have donned e-mail and Web addresses. Comic fans want more. They want to talk to other collectors and want to get closer to comic creators, but don't necessarily want to travel to conventions. Meeting people online is almost as good as talking on the phone and getting mail, only it's less expensive and more exhilarating.

"Peter David, Mark Evanier and Walt Simonson aren't sitting in stores every day waiting for [fans] to show up," explains Doug Pratt, who owns and operates the Comic and Animation Forum on CompuServe. According to Pratt, the 10-year-old comic forum has more than 45,000 members, including many professionals.

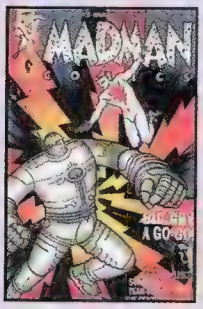
Wizard and DC Comics recently set up forums on America Online, while Tekno•Comix set up on Prodigy.

The World Wide Web (or the "Web") has also enjoyed a massive growth spurt. "Web pages provide huge opportunities for publishers to broaden readership, advertise products and gain sales," says Sean Husvar, president of Edge Marketing, a company that specializes in setting up Web pages for publishers.

Edge Marketing designed the Spawn Web page and the soon-to-be-debuted Wizard Press Web Page.

"The current explosion is just the camel's nose sticking into the tent," predicts Pratt. "Online is here to stay." ■ *Buddy Scalera*

• "Birthquake" hits Acclaim Comics, as artist Bart Sears soars to *X-O Manowar* with #44 and writer/artist Dan Jurgens jumps to *Solar* with #46
• Madman meets The Big Guy, *Madman Comics* #6



• Those wacky Animaniacs get their own ongoing series, DC's *Animaniacs* #1
• Firestorm returns, *Extreme Justice* #4

18 Michael Jordan announces his return to pro basketball after a 17-month hiatus

21 Clark Kent "dies," *Superman* #100
• *X-Universe* #1 shows the full "Age of Apocalypse" world
• *Double Impact* #1 unleashes two new Bad Girls

25 Heavyweight boxing champ Mike Tyson released from prison

27 "Forrest Gump" sweeps Academy Awards, leaving "Pulp Fiction" with consolation prize of Best Original Screenplay

28 *Gen13* becomes an ongoing series (with 13 variant covers to kick it off!), #1

31 Selena, Latin-American singer, fatally shot

APRIL

2 Major League Baseball players' strike officially ends (Whoooo!)

3 UCLA wins NCAA championship over Arkansas, 89-78

4 Several DC titles switch to better format (and higher prices), starting with *Action Comics* #710
• Vertigo's *Coddess* #1
• *Glory* #1

11 Ghost and Lisa Simpson get their own ongoing series

19 Car bomb explodes outside federal office building in Oklahoma City, Okla., killing nearly 200 people

23 Howard Cosell, TV and radio sports broadcaster, dies

25 *Rune/Silver Surfer* #1

28 DC announces that Diamond Comics Distributors would be its sole distributor for direct market comics, starting with September books

MAY

2 *X-Men Prime* #1 brings the X-verse back to "normal"
• Milestone's "Long Hot Summer" epic kicks off, causing major problems in the Milestone Universe

MAGIC SHOW

WITH THE COMICS INDUSTRY TAKING A DOWNWARD TURN, retailers needed a boost. They needed a shot in the arm. They needed another source of revenue. They needed…a little *Magic*.

What they got saved many a business.

Magic: The Gathering was a big seller for comic stores in '95, perhaps their biggest. Wizards of the Coast's collectible card game debuted in August 1993 at Gen Con, and the game slowly picked up popularity as word spread. Comic stores soon started to carry the hot game that players couldn't get enough of, and the result was phenomenal.

Stores reported *Magic* sales at their peak to be as much as 30 percent of the store's business—an impressive total for a single product, to say nothing of the fact that it wasn't even comics-related. "When *Magic* was at its peak," says retailer John Anderson of Big Planet Comics in Vienna, Va., "it was often the only thing we would sell on Mondays or Tuesdays, which are normally our slow days."

In an attempt to jump on the *Magic* bandwagon, Acclaim Comics has released a series of *Magic* comics, which are the company's highest-selling titles.

As more and more stores carry *Magic*, and more collectible card games (CCGs) are offered, sales are starting to drop. Stores now report an average of 10-15 percent of their sales coming from *Magic*, but hope the figures will rise with the release of the newest expansion set *Homelands* and the arrival of the holiday season.

While Wizards of the Coast did not initially expect to get such high sales from comic shops, it also didn't expect the game's sales to skyrocket the way they did. The question now remains—will *Magic* continue to be a force in the comics industry?

Currently it's a raging debate. "If distribution isn't fixed soon, *Magic* may go the way of POGs in comic stores," says Jon Cohen of Collector's World in Gaithersburg, Md. In contrast, many insiders in the gaming industry are hopeful that collectible card games are here to stay. "Think of *Magic* as a champion for the next generation of gaming—what *D&D* was to roleplaying 20 years ago," says Michael Searle, editor of *InQuest* magazine. "In the past, it was always dice rolling; in the future, it'll be card fanning."

■ *Greg McElhatton*

9 Sandman dies, is replaced by Daniel, *Sandman* #69

• ShadowHawk dies of complications due to AIDS, *ShadowHawk* #18

16 Bartman quits, *Bartman* #4

• *Sovereign Seven*, DC's first creator-owned series to be integrated into the DC Universe, begins as the team winds up in DC's reality

• *X-Man* #5 ships, continuing the series from "Age of Apocalypse," as X-Man jumps into Marvel's reality

• "WildStorm Rising" epic begins with #1

• *Avengelyne* #1 introduces a powerful fallen angel

18 Elizabeth Montgomery, star of "Bewitched," dies

19 "X-Files" cliffhanger season finale airs; it's a *long* summer.

23 "Our" Spidey is revealed to be the clone in *Spectacular Spider-Man* #226

• *Superman vs. Aliens* #1, from DC and Dark Horse

• Clark "returns" in *Adventures of Superman* #525, and everything's just fine in Superman's world

26 Friz Freleng, Warner Brothers animator for 30 years, dies

27 "Superman" actor Christopher Reeve becomes paralyzed from the neck down when thrown

headlong from his horse during a riding competition

30 New quarterly Superman title, *Superman: The Man of Tomorrow*, and new quarterly Batman title, *The Batman Chronicles*, launch

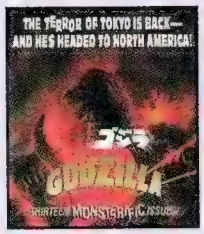
• Artemis (the new Wonder Woman) dies, *WW* #100

• Alfred returns to work, *Nightwing: Alfred's Return*

• Cannonball graduates to the X-Men, *X-Force* #44

• The Black Knight ends up in the Ultraverse, *UltraForce* #8

• CODZILLA RETURNS!!!—*Godzilla* #0 from Dark Horse



THE BIG 10

BAD GIRLS MAKE IT GOOD

IT USED TO BE EASY TO BE A GIRL IN COMICS. The role of the female was to get captured by bad guys (and rescued by good guys) and be generally nurturing, supportive and understanding.

"They never started any trouble," says current *Wonder Woman* artist/writer John Byrne, "they were just there to back up the boys and look good doing it."

"But this past year," he states, "the volume has definitely been turned up."

Enter the Bad Girls.

The so-called "Bad Girl" trend in comics seemed to be set in place when Chaos! Comics' Lady Death, Crusade Comics' Shi and Harris Comics' Vampirella burst on the scene and hit it big.

The mighty Bad Girl boom blossomed and is currently a full-bodied phenomenon. "Even with the talk of the lull in the comics industry," comments Harris' Melanie Crawford Chadwick, "every month there seems to be a new crop of Bad Girl comic books featuring characters I've never heard of before, put out by companies I've never heard of before, produced by creators I've never heard of before."

"When we put out our books," confirms *Shi* creator Bill Tucci, "we were told that 'girl books' didn't sell."

"*Shi* came out within a six-week period of our book," says Lady Death creator Brian Pulido, "and I think there was a synergistic reaction to having *Lady Death*, *Shi* and *Vampirella* released at the same time."

What makes a female comic book character a Bad Girl? "The Bad Girl seems to take Good Girl art one step beyond," says Chadwick. "She's a woman with an attitude."

And, by the way, none of these ladies likes to be called a Bad Girl. "Lady Death's not a *girl*," Pulido points out, "she's a woman. What does that mean—Lobo is a Bad Boy? If she ever heard someone calling her a Bad Girl," he chuckles, "she'd kill them."

Will Bad Girls last as long as books with X's in them? Byrne, former writer/artist on *She-Hulk* and the *Uncanny X-Men*, doesn't think so.

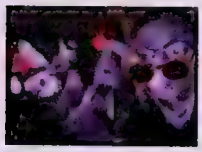
"While I think there's a need and an audience for well written, strong female characters, I see the Bad Girl phenomenon as primarily short-term.

"Most of the Bad Girl books seem to rely solely on shock value," Byrne notices, "and shock value is not something you can maintain long-term.

"Ask Madonna." ■ *Ruth Morrison*

BILL TUCCI'S SHI AND MARC SILVESTRI'S CYBLADE GOT TOGETHER FOR A BAD GIRL CROSSOVER.

- *Neil Gaiman's Lady Justice* #1
- "Casper" film released



JUNE

6 Artist Mike Wieringo jumps into *Robin* series with #19
- Mera swims back, *Aquaman* #11

13 Spawn gets new duds, *Spawn* #32
- Golden Age Sandman meets the Hourman, *Sandman Mystery Theatre* #29
- *Spider-Man: Maximum Clonage Alpha*

14 Michael Jackson and Lisa Marie Presley appear on ABC's "Prime Time Live," and are asked wimpy questions by Diane Sawyer

16 "Batman Forever" released

23 Dr. Jonas Salk, creator of polio vaccine, dies

25 "Judge Dredd" released

27 *Conan* #1 welcomes back the popular hero
- *Dawn* #1 reintroduces the beautiful Bad Girl
- British actor Hugh Grant arrested with a prostitute in Hollywood, Calif.

JULY

1 Marvel and Malibu officially go exclusive with Heroes World

4 Apparition dies, *Legionnaires Annual* #2
- Actress Eva Gabor dies

11 John Byrne takes over *Wonder Woman* with #101
- *Lady Rawhide* #1

18 Writer Grant Morrison revamps the Skrulls in *Skrull Kill Krew*

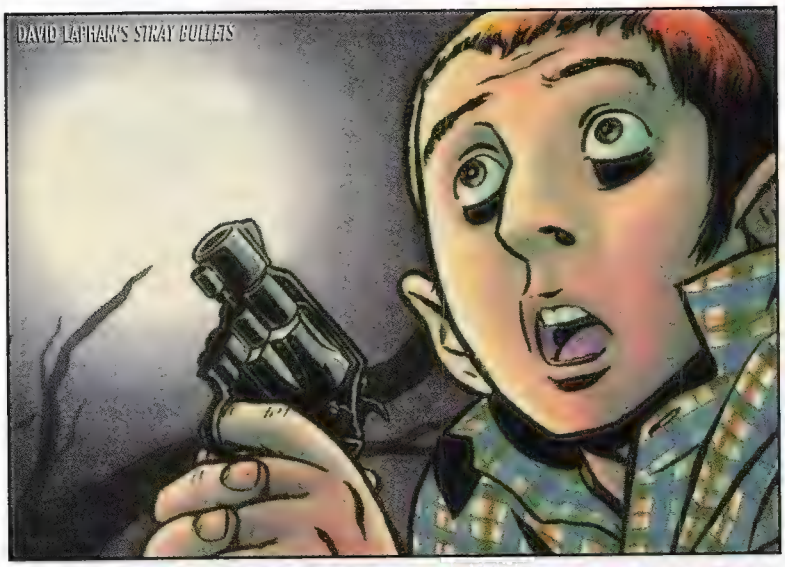
- Frank Miller and Geof Darrow give us *The Big Guy & Rusty the Boy Robot* #1
- Alan Moore becomes *WildC.A.T.s* writer with #21

20 George Carragonne, *Penthouse Comix* editor, commits suicide

25 Loooong-awaited *Nightwing* mini-series begins
- Thunderstrike dies (sniff), issue #24
- Avengers revamp begins, *Avengers: The Crossing*

26 Selena's posthumously released *Dreaming of You* album becomes first album by Latin artist to reach #1 on pop charts

27 San Diego Comic Con takes place until July 30



SMALL PRESS, BIG SPLASH

"THE SMALL PRESS IS THE STRONGEST AND BEST GROWING PART OF THE COMIC BOOK INDUSTRY," says Jon Cohen, who organized the Small Press Expo in Maryland last June. "People are picking them up and getting more out of them because the creators are putting more into them. I'm not saying it's not going on in other places, but the small press is where it's really happening and fans and stores are starting to see it."

Cohen may be on to something. Small press has boomed in the last year, led by founding father Dave Sim who completed issue #200 of *Cerebus* in November. Writer/artist Sim, along with his background artist Gerhard, plan another 100 issues of the adventures of the ill-tempered aardvark.

"There's nothing but optimism and excitement on our end," says Sim. "Now it's time to push forward the only way we can—with our creativity."

Diversity marks the small press approach to comics and self-publishing from the graphically violent and realistic world of David Lapham's *Stray Bullets* to James Owen's *Starchild*, which features a fantasy setting in which all the characters seek a magical mantel. Then there's Colleen Doran's *A Distant Soil* in which a strangely powered brother and sister find themselves in an other-worldly adventure, and Martin Wagner's *Hepcats*, a book that tackles relationships and sensitive subjects, including child abuse and suicide.

The future could be rocky for the small press, as self-publishers try to survive being squeezed out by the distribution wars. But self-publishing and small press is all about survival. The key, of course, is quality.

"[The next big comic industry event] is going to come from somebody who has a different thought or idea or concept," says *TUG & buster*'s Marc Hempel. "It's going to come from the self-publishers and the independents." ■ *John B. Lacey (With additional reporting by Tom Palmer Jr.)*

Apocalypse Now

REALITY BIT. BIT THE DUST, THAT IS. AND FANS COULDN'T BE HAPPIER.

Marvel's blockbuster "Age of Apocalypse" storyline was the "What If?" story that really happened, where time-traveling X-Men failed to prevent a time paradox in the past which created a post-apocalyptic present for the Marvel Universe. So great was its impact that all eight of the monthly X-Men titles were placed on hiatus and replaced by all new titles to reflect the new "reality." The story ran from January through April, with all eight X-titles dominating the Top 10 selling comics lists for all four months, reaffirming the fact that Marvel's franchise players are still at the top of their game.

But the story didn't end when the regular X-titles resumed in May. Its impact has spilled over into current continuity. "Anything that happens with regard to the 'Age of Apocalypse' will revolve around X-Man, the grey Beast, Sugarman and Holocaust, plus Bishop, who was a major figure in the storyline," says Ben Raab, assistant editor of the X-Men titles. "Those are the four characters who came through, and all of the stuff that happens with them will now take place in current continuity."

One story has the evil Beast infiltrate the X-Men in *X-Men Unlimited* #10, a story also involving the blue-furred version of the character. In addition, X-Man will finally meet Rogue for the first time, coming closer to meeting key X-Men characters.

Despite its success, no upcoming specials or mini-series relating to "The Age of Apocalypse" are currently planned. Says Raab, "We're still getting responses, more than six months later." ■ *Andrew Steven Harris*

31 Disney announces $19 billion Capital Cities/ABC purchase, creating the world's largest media and entertainment company

AUGUST

1 Green Arrow dies in plane explosion, is replaced by son Connor, *GA* #101
- Nick Fury is killed by the Punisher and replaced by son Scorpio, *Double Edge Omega*
- The Visitor is revealed to be Sting (from *Harbinger*), and then dies, *The Visitor* #13
- *Dark Horse Presents* reaches #100, five special issues are released

8 *Darkseid vs. Galactus*
- Zan and Jayna (the Wonder-twins) return! *Extreme Justice* #9
- *Uncanny X-Men* #325 kicks off the celebration of the new X-team's 20th anniversary
- Venom 2099 hits the scene, *Spider-Man 2099 A.D.* #36

- *Kurt Busiek's Astro City* #1
- *Mars Attacks!* returns with #1
- *Battlestar Galactica* returns with #1
- Buck Wild, the replacement Icon, dies, *Icon* #30

9 Jerry Garcia, singer, guitarist and songwriter for the Grateful Dead, dies

13 Mickey Mantle, center fielder for the New York Yankees (1951-68), dies

15 Bane returns, *Vengeance of Bane II*
- Mark Waid and Ron Garney start their efforts to improve *Captain America* with #444
- The New Gods return in a new, ongoing series
- *Avengers/UltraForce* #1

22 *Batman: Man-Bat* #1
- Nightwing gets a new costume, *Nightwing* #2
- Barbie becomes a superheroine, *Flying Hero Barbie* #1
- Rogue leaves Gambit and the X-Men in *X-Men* #45, Fabian Nicieza's last issue as writer
- *Prophet* (vol. 2) #1

29 "Our" Peter Parker hands the role of Spider-Man over to Ben Reilly, *Spectacular Spider-Man* #229
- *UltraForce/Avengers* #1

THE BIG 10

THE MANGA MIGRATION

MANGA AND ANIME—Japanese comics and videos—have exploded into the U.S. with coverage in such mainstream publications as the *New York Times*, *Newsweek*, *USA Today* and *Wired*. Long popular in Japan, how did the U.S. suddenly get exposed to this phenomenon?

"Because of the success of the Mighty Morphin' Power Rangers," says Seiji Horibuchi, executive editor at Viz Comics, the largest U.S. publisher of manga. "Even though it's neither Japanese comics nor animation, they associate it with that world. 'Power Rangers' was a hit, and on its heels came [the Japanese videos] 'Sailor Moon' and 'Dragonball.' "

Viz Comics led manga sales in the U.S., holding a one-percent share of the industry. Along with its top-selling title *Ranma 1/2*, Viz introduced America's first monthly manga anthology magazine, *Manga Vizion*. Dark Horse also continued its high-profile manga releases, including Masamune Shirow's *Ghost in the Shell*, which will soon be released as an anime movie in the U.S. through Manga Entertainment. Dark Horse's biggest success of the year was *Domu*, which had the magic name of *Akira* creator Katsuhiro Otomo behind it and something of a crossover horror appeal. Dark Horse has high hopes for 1996 with its new manga series *You're Under Arrest!* from Kosuke Fujishima, creator of the hit *Oh My Goddess!*

After a three-year delay, *Akira*—the top-selling manga in U.S. history—was restarted in September by Epic.

It seems that graphic novels may be a point of emphasis for manga in the upcoming year.

"Japanese comics are usually a story told over 200-300 pages," says Horibuchi, who adds that Viz has seen a 100-percent increase in graphic novel sales from '94 to '95. "When you can hold all of that mana in your hand at once, you're enjoying it in its most natural form." ■ *Carl Horn*

MASAMUNE SHIROW'S *GHOST IN THE SHELL* WAS A BIG HIT FOR DARK HORSE.

Distributor Exclusives

IT WILL AFFECT YOU WHETHER YOU LIKE IT OR NOT.

No event in recent comics history has had as much impact as Marvel's December 1994 acquisition of Heroes World Distribution Co. (HWD). That purchase—and Marvel's subsequent naming of Heroes World as its exclusive distributor in July—led many other major publishers to sign exclusive distribution deals too.

DC responded to Marvel's announcement by signing an exclusive distribution deal with Diamond Comics, the largest national distributor of comics. Diamond still distributed all other comics publishers, except for Marvel.

Fearing they would lose their clout, other publishers also signed exclusive distribution deals, primarily with Diamond and its largest competitor, Capital City.

The changes will impact readers in the long term, but nobody is sure to what extent, say retailers. "I don't think anyone has really given sufficient thought to how the distribution changes would affect the readers," says Carol Denbow of Star Clipper Books in St. Louis. Here are what some see as the key changes:

1. Fewer comics. "I suspect more stores will not carry Kitchen Sink books [distributed only by Capital] because they won't want to deal with yet another distributor," says Brian Hibbs, owner of Comix Experience in San Francisco.

Some are also cutting their orders from individual publishers despite improved incentives, because other discounts have been lessened. At Comix Experience, for instance, Hibbs stopped ordering Marvel comics for his racks unless they sold at least 15-20 copies per month.

SEPTEMBER

5 *Underworld Unleashed* #1
- *Web of Scarlet Spider* #1 marks Ben Reilly's first adventure as the one and only web-slinger
- *Spider-Man/Batman*
- Ensign Ro returns, *Deep Space Nine* #28

8 Malibu founders and vice presidents Tom Mason and Chris Ulm officially leave their positions

10 Emmy night: "ER" wins Best Directing and Best Writing, but loses Best Drama to "NYPD Blue"; *Wizard* editor Marc W. coaxed into putting gun down

12 "The Trial of Superman" begins, *Superman: The Man of Steel* #50
- Superboy meets the Legion of Super-Heroes, *Superboy* #21

- Malibu's Ultraverse relaunch begins with *Siren Infinity*, brings cover prices down to $1.50

15 Villains in fourth Bat-movie announced to be Mr. Freeze and Poison Ivy

17 Mr. Burns' assailant revealed as Maggie Simpson on "The Simpsons" and Lois turns down Clark's marraige proposal on "Lois & Clark"

26 *Batman & Robin Adventures* begins
- Doctor Doom returns from the dead, *Fantastic Four* #406
- *The Last Avengers Story* #1
- The Punisher gets sent to the electric chair, *Punisher* #1
- Darkseid killed, *New Gods* #2
- *Shi/Cyblade* brings several independent creators and their characters together
- *Conan/Rune* brings artist Barry Windsor-Smith back to Conan
- *Ash* #5 features a cover and some interior art by the Hildebrandt Brothers

OCTOBER

3 *Bone* #21, its first Image issue
- *Creed* moves to Lightning Comics with #1
- A revitalized (and much younger) Magneto returns to Earth, *Uncanny X-Men* #327
- *Amazing Fantasy* #16 shows what happened to Spider-Man between *Amazing Fantasy* #15 and *Amazing Spider-Man* #1
- O.J. farce ends with Simpson found not guilty

5 *Vampirella Strikes* #1

7 Pope John Paul II comes to New York City's Central Park, to the delight of 300,000 people who stood in the rain
- Worf joins "Star Trek: Deep Space Nine," to the delight of millions of Trekkies

10 Captain Marvel's son Legacy becomes the new Captain Marvel, *Captain Marvel* #1

Except for a few standout titles, such as the X-Men line, *Hulk*, and *Untold Tales of Spider-Man*, he orders only Marvel titles that his customers order in advance. He also won't support new books from DC unless they offer something unique. "When I took out the Marvel line, I realized I didn't need to blindly support everything a publisher puts out."

2. Shipping Times. Marvel comics used to be air-freighted to warehouses to arrive on Mondays. Now the publisher ships via UPS and the comics arrive at stores on Wednesday, when other publishers' comics also arrive but at a different time during the day. "Fans are used to comics being in the stores at a given time—*all* comics," adds Denbow. "It is very hard for them to understand that DC and Image may be here today but Marvel will be in tomorrow because it comes in through another delivery source. When they are inconvenienced by having to return at a later date [or time], they are angry."

3. Fewer stores. Retailers' inability to order everything from one distributor and receive a high-volume discount cuts into profits. Some stores can't afford that loss.

Says Hibbs, "I expect to see a lot of stores go away in the next six months."

Those that survive, he adds, will evolve. More will offer special-order programs and subscription services, and they will be more aggressive in promoting them. "I expect to see stores focusing on the lines the owner likes and carrying fewer other titles. We may wind up where we were 25 years ago, where readers had to go to many stores to get all the comics they wanted."

Those changes aren't necessarily bad, he stresses. "This [comics retail] system worked well when there were 250 comics a month, but it doesn't when there are 1,000. I think if we make comics harder to find, readers will be more selective. They'll also enjoy them more if they have to put some effort into the purchase and decide what they really want to read." ■ *Craig Shutt*

NEW YEAR'S SOLUTIONS

The 10 Things *Wizard* Would Like to See in 1996

• **A NEW TEEN TITANS BOOK** on par with the level of quality DC puts into *Robin, Superboy* and *Impulse*. And the team should star those three, along with female members the Spoiler and Mary Marvel. Get writer Chuck Dixon and artist Tom Grummett together to do it and DC'd be set to go.

• **CAPTAIN AMERICA KICKING BATMAN'S BUTT.** Even though Batman will probably win in the fan balloting for the Marvel/DC crossover, Cap should beat Batman. Cap never loses in a fight and shouldn't, even to Batman. Hope it's a good brawl, though.

• **SUPERMAN GETTING HITCHED TO LOIS LANE.** We've been waiting for almost five years since Clark proposed to Lois. If Aunt May can die, then those two can finally get married. Hey, it's the American Way.

• **A GOOD COMIC BOOK-BASED MOVIE.** Enough of the "Judge Dredd"s and "Tank Girl"s. Give us a quality movie, like the promised James Cameron "Spider-Man" flick already. Cameron wouldn't make crap.

• **CREATORS HAVING MORE COMMITMENT** to a series. A creator should stick with a book and not roam around a lot or jump instantly to any X-title with an "opening." Fans crave consistency and continuity on any book and that's exactly what creators should give 'em.

• **PETER PARKER AS SPIDER-MAN.** Calling Spidey "Ben Reilly" is like calling Charlie Brown "Joe Blow." It just don't sound right. With all the other things Spidey fans have to deal with, let's at least get Peter back as a name for the wall-crawler.

• **MARKET STABILITY.** We don't care how, but we want our comics. We want to be able to go to our local comic shop and pick up our favorite books. The fans only get hurt in the long run if publishers and distributors don't keep that in perspective.

• **MORE 99-CENT BOOKS.** With all the price hikes of late, ain't it cool that Marvel is keeping some prices low with a couple of books? Let's hope more're on the way and other publishers follow suit.

• **CREATORS FOCUSING ON THE COMICS.** Comics have become secondary with creators' current attitude of "I'll do comics and then a video game and toys and movies and cartoons and a toilet seat." They should *never* forget the comic book fans that made them successful in the first place.

• **MORE SELF-CONTAINED STORIES** like those of *Untold Tales of Spider-Man, Stray Bullets* and *Astro City*. The massive, hyped crossover story has taken over this industry. New fans just can't "come on in" to comics anymore; they gotta wade through multi-issue and multi-title stories.

20 "Malirats" opens, with a Stan Lee cameo
24 Reed Richards returns, *Fantastic Four* #407

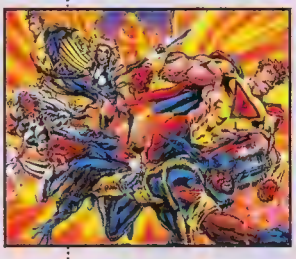
• *Chaos! Quarterly* #1
• *Witchblade* #1 unleashes a new Bad Girl
31 *Spider-Man Team-Up* "relaunches" the long-canceled *Marvel Team-Up*
• *Red Sonja* #1 brings Conan's favorite gal back to her own series
• *Youngblood* (vol. 2) #1 gives Image's first team a new start

NOVEMBER

7 *Sensational Spider-Man*, written and penciled by Dan Jurgens, begins, as Ben Reilly officially becomes the new Spidey and gets a new costume
• *Mister Miracle* #1
• The new Green Arrow meets the new Green Lantern in *Green Arrow* #104
• *Damage, The Darkstars* and *Judge Dredd* end
• The Elementals return with Comico's #1
• Comico's manga-inspired *Red Dragon* begins
14 *Lobo/Judge Dredd: Psycho Bikers vs. Mutants from Hell*
21 *Black Canary/Oracle: Birds of Prey* #1 teams the two heroines
• Kyle Rayner splits up with Donna Troy, *Green Lantern* #70
28 *Green Lantern/Silver Surfer* #1
• New Vertigo series, *Seekers*, begins
• *Chaos! Bible*
• *Cerebus* reaches the two-thirds mark at #200
• Rob Liefeld returns to *X-Force*, does cover for #50

DECEMBER

5 *Archangel* #1
• *Avengers: Timeslide* #1 continues the huge Avengers revamp
• Nightwing takes on Azrael, *Azrael* #13
• Robin meets the new Green Arrow, *Green Arrow* #105
12 Fanboy's dream come true: *DC versus Marvel* #1 pits both universes greatest heroes and villains against one another
• *Logan* #1 takes Wolverine's fans farther into his past than ever
• *The Phoenix Resurrection—Genesis* begins the epic that brings back Marvel's Phoenix character
• *Vamps: Hollywood & Vein* #1
• *Rune vs. Venom* #1
19 The windrider goes solo in *Storm* #1
• *The New Titans* ends with #130
• *Akira* finally ends with #38
• *GI Joe* #1, from Dark Horse
26 Superman's old girlfriend Lori Lemaris returns, *Adventures of Superman* #532
• Batman's semi-pal gets own mini-series with *Man-Bat* #1 ■



The "Get Your Aggravation Out" Contest

Ooooh, this modern world! It sure can be a big pain in the ass. Everywhere you look there's litterbugs, bigots, bad drivers or mall chicks aggravating you to no end. Fortunately, Cyberfrog is here! Cyberfrog—who dispenses harsh justice on the depraved, the evil and the stupid! (Particularly the stupid.) But why should Froggie be the only one who gets to pound the puddin' out of those who aggravate him? Why can't you get in on the act?

HEY! YOU CAN!

Just let us know who you'd like to slap silly, if only you had the power, and Cyberfrog will help you kick the snot out of some pain-in-the-butt losers. Let us know who *you* think really needs a good knee-drop in the spleen. Is it morning-drive radio disc jockeys? Afternoon TV talk show hosts? Rush Limbaugh? Bill Clinton? Golfers? The French? French golfers?

Tell us why these people or groups deserve the wrath of Cyberfrog in any way you want. Write it in a sentence. Write it in a 300-page book. Draw us a picture, whatever. Just let us know who really ticks you off! The best responses get some cool prizes.

COOL PRIZES

GRAND PRIZE (1):

One reader will receive an original drawing of him or herself and Cyberfrog beating the holy beejesus out of the group or individual that the reader hates, done up by Cyberfrog creator Ethan Van Sciver! You'll also get a copy of *Cyberfrog* #1 autographed by Van Sciver.

FIRST PRIZE (20):

Twenty readers will receive an Ethan Van Sciver-autographed copy of the all-new angst-ridden *Cyberfrog* #1.

Amphibious Legalese

No purchase necessary. Contest is open to anyone except employees of Wizard Press, Harris Comics and their immediate families or Kermit the Frog. You don't want to know what we do to Muppets around here. Print your name, date of birth, address, city, state, zip and telephone number with area code on the official entry form or a 3-by-5 inch index card and attach it to your entry. Enter as many times as you like. Mail each entry separately to: Cyberfrog Aggravation Contest, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118. No mechanical reproductions of completed forms are accepted but you can photocopy the entry form before filling it out if you don't want to mess up your magazine. All entries become property of Wizard Press and none will be returned. All taxes (federal, state and local, if any) will be the responsibility of the prize winners. No cash equivalent or substitute prizes will be offered. Prizes are awarded in the names of the contest winners and are not transferable. Offer void where prohibited, regulated or restricted by law in a manner inconsistent with the purposes and rules hereof. Oh, please pick golfers. Please, please, please pick golfers. We hate 'em, too. We'd just love to bludgeon 'em all into submission with their own 7-irons. All entries must be received at contest headquarters by January 31, 1996. Wizard Press is not responsible for lost, late, misdirected or mutilated entries. Odds of winning will be determined by the number of valid entries received prior to the closing date of the contest. Prize winners will be selected based on quality and creativity among all properly completed entries by Wizard Press. Judging will take place on February 15, 1996.

For a list of winners, available after February 15, 1996, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to: Cyberfrog Aggravation Contest Winners, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118.

Fill this sucker out, attach it to your entry, put it in an envelope and send it to:

Cyberfrog Aggravation Contest, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118.

This contest is sponsored by Harris Comics, a bunch of people with a few scores to settle.

HARRIS COMICS

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DEADLINE IS JANUARY 31, 1996!

Name _____ Date of Birth _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone Number (with area code) _____

So who'd you like to beat about the face, neck, chest and head area?

by Lea Hernandez

Koichi Ohata M.D.

"M.D. Geist" was Ohata's breakthrough work.

Koichi Ohata is one of Japan's monster and mecha masters. Born in Nagoya, Japan—the geographical halfway point between Tokyo and Osaka—Ohata still makes his home in Japan, although he is a frequent visitor to the United States.

An introspective 33-year-old, he began his career as a writer, and moved into designing mecha for anime. He also designs for live-action, works in comics and directs. Currently, Ohata is involved in an anime and comics prequel to what he feels was his seminal work, the anime video "M.D. Geist." Ohata not only wrote the original story for "M.D. Geist," but he was also its assistant director and mecha designer. "M.D. Geist," the story of a perfect but deadly soldier, also has one of Ohata's favorite recurring themes: the man/monster dichotomy.

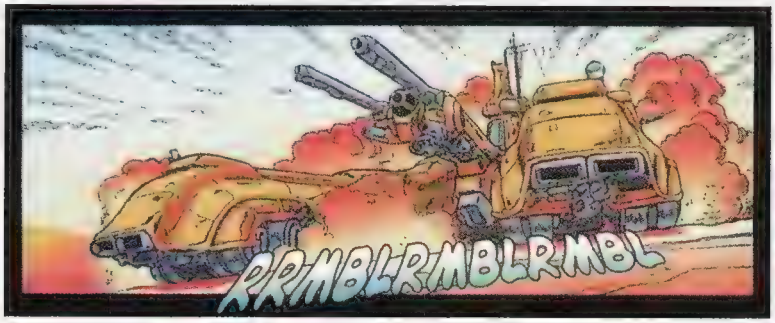
Ohata also worked on the comedic "Lamune and 40" anime as a mecha designer, but prefers hard science over comedy.

After graduating from high school, Ohata briefly attended art school, but quickly realized he wasn't getting what he wanted out of it, so he quit to teach himself. "I think you cannot learn to be an artist systematically. It comes from your intuition, it comes from your inspiration. You can't learn that from school." It also comes, he adds, from doing the work.

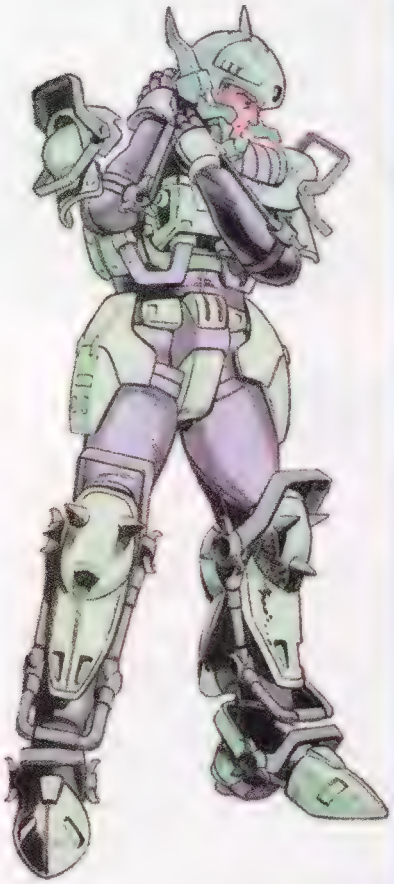
Ohata didn't always dream of being an artist, but he was "already there" when he realized it's what he wanted. He's also quick to identify what gave him his break as an artist: "M.D. Geist." "It was the first project that made me realize with effort you can achieve something."

Ohata is excited about the recent American comics adaptation of "M.D. Geist" from CPM Comics, saying he was surprised and happy when he was first approached about the project two years ago. Ohata is also happy to be "an artist in this country" because it puts him in stores with his favorite American comic artists—including Simon Bisley and Todd McFarlane—and one of his favorite comics, Dark Horse's *Ghost*. To get these books, Ohata frequents Los Angeles' Golden Apple Comics on trips to the U.S., and relies on packages from friends.

Like Americans who can read little or no Japanese, Ohata admits he can't understand completely what is going on in American comic books, but he does enjoy the art and



design of them. Also, like many manga fans in the U.S., he buys these comics for inspiration. The work of McFarlane and Bisley appeals to Ohata, he says, by reminding him of how he saw things when he was a child: everything has two sides to it. "When something is beautiful, there is also something not beautiful. If something is very scary, there is also something not scary."



This is how he approaches things in his own work, Ohata adds. His stories have monsters, but it's important to him to keep people at the core. "I try to keep a message of humanism to get close to the viewer."

Although his work is science fiction, Ohata wants the viewer to relate to the work in a way that helps them experience it as if it were real. But he clearly wants to rock them as well. "My goal is to stimulate viewer's brains and shake their bodies. I am always trying to do this."

Special thanks to John O'Donnell of Central Park Media for arranging the interview, and Young Hwal Son for translating.
Until next time. W

Lea Hernandez letters and retouches manga, co-moderates the anime and manga forum for the online service GEnie, and writes and draws comics.

manga & anime NEWS

FUSION STUDIOS BRINGS MANGA MAINSTREAM

Popular *Zen* artist Joel Orbeta has announced the formation of Fusion Studios, whose goal is to produce a new breed of comics that combines the best of anime and manga with mainstream U.S. comics. Orbeta believes that America is ready for hybrid comics, saying that anime and manga are on the cutting edge of world pop culture.

Zen Intergalactic Ninja co-creator Steve Stern hasn't missed the fact that there are already American manga and manga-influenced comics like *Dirty Pair* in the comics market. His goal, however, is to produce a comic book that has wide crossover appeal to fans of both traditions.

Stern and Orbeta will also be producing the cyber-manga *Shygirl*. *Shygirl* generated interest with her appearance in the recent *Zen* color series, so much so, that a Shygirl CD-ROM, milkcap game, foreign-issue postage stamps, phone cards and other licenses are in the offing.

For a further look at Shygirl, check out her Web site at: http://www.wid.com/compop/shygirl.

Stern and Orbeta will be on tour for the rest of the year promoting *Manga Zen* and *Shygirl*, which debut in early 1996, and plan to appear at next year's Project A-Kon in Dallas, Texas. (For info on tour availability, call 516-371-2540, fax 516-371-2540, e-mail 75712.2066@compuserve.com or compop@wid.com.)

EVERYBODY'S GONE SURFIN'

If you're an anime fan and you're not World Wide Webbed yet—you need to be. If you're on America Online, go visit their Web Browser! Both anime/manga fans and professionals alike are setting up Web pages to entertain, amuse and advertise.

The basic Web Crawler for anime and manga resources should include Yahoo. Yahoo is a clearinghouse for, well, everything on the Web, including stupid pages, hot pages, pages for mainstream comics professionals, and anime and manga. Yahoo is at http://www.yahoo.com:80/. Just follow the links to Entertainment and on to anime.

A couple of professional companies on the Web are Manga Entertainment and AnimEigo. The Manga Entertainment page is as slick as one might expect, and now has added pages to tie in with the upcoming release of the animated "Ghost in the Shell" movie based on Shirow Masamune's manga. You can go to http://www.manga.com/manga and click the GITS button, or go directly to

NEXT PAGE →

http://www.manga.com/manga/ghost/ghost.html.

Next, there's Software Sculptors' page at http://www.panix.com/~snowdog/sculptor.html. It includes a brief history of the company, pictures and downloadable clips. Backing up one link to http://www.panix.com/~snowdog/ gives you Anime Access, with links to some of the best anime sites on the Web, pages devoted to *Oh My Goddess!*, *Ranma* 1/2, magazines, and a list of video release dates and prices. Well worth the time!

Finally, there's the AnimEigo Web page. AnimEigo has brought over fan-favorite titles like *BubbleGum Crisis*, *Urusei Yatsura* and *Oh My Goddess!*. Check what's happening with them at ttp://www.wilmington.net/modular/animeigo/a_home.html. ●

You can find lots of cool manga and anime, like "Ranma 1/2" (left) floatin on the Web!

picks of the month

manga:
X 1999

(Viz Comics, $2.95, monthly, b&w, six issues ending October 1995, then serialized monthly in *Animerica* magazine beginning in November with Volume 3, issue #11)

X is a comic from an emerging genre in Japan, a marriage of the artistic traditions of shojo (girls' comics), art style (low panel count, beautiful female *and* male characters, pretty art) and the action-adventure tradition of shonen (boys' comics). The anti-hero of *X*, is Kamui, a violent and careless ESPer who is apparently destined to destroy the world and is opposed by the as-of-yet semi-revealed forces of Good.

The artist of *X*, Clamp, is actually a team of six women. In Japan, they have become quite popular for their work as a group, and their publisher plans to popularize them in print, television and other media.

The bad news about *X* is that the sixth issue will already be out by the time you read this. The semi-bad news is that the first six issues are only a taste of the story. The semi-good news is that back issues of manga, while not always easy to find are cheap (ask for them through the Viz phone shopping service at 415-546-7073). The good news is that *X* will continue as a serial in the monthly anime and manga magazine, *Animerica*, reason enough to shell out your dough and continue to enjoy this lush work.

video:
Zenki

(Software Sculptors, subtitled, 90 minutes, $24.95, 6 volumes released every other month, volume 3 ships in December)

Chiaki, an adorable high school student, commands the mighty demon lord Zenki, who was tamed by her ancestor, Enno Ozuno, 1,200 years earlier. The Zenki of Ozuno's time seems to have been a bit more impressive than the bratty creature that Chiaki releases from a mountain to help her battle the evil God, Karma. Chiaki's Zenki, who appears to be about 10-years-old, is obnoxious and wild but seemingly ineffective until his demon side is triggered by Chiaki... then it's monster-munching mayhem.

Here's a decent quantity of anime for an amount of money that's not wallet-busting. While putting girls and monsters together is nothing new, "Zenki" is different because the girl actually controls the monster.

A television series in Japan, "Zenki" offers made-for-video quality in its design and animation. Software Sculptors began releasing the first ten episodes in six volumes for alternating months last September. The next volume is due in December, but previous volumes will remain in release. If response warrants, Sculptors will continue to exercise its option and bring over more "Zenki," which already has over 50 episodes in Japan. ●

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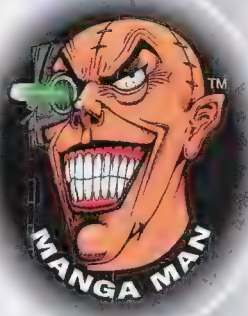

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Coming Soon: Masamune Shirow's GHOST IN THE SHELL

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a look at some cool stuff with an alternative twist

Pressing On in '96

The small press isn't so small anymore. If there's one thing that became increasingly apparent in 1995, it's that there's a bigger audience out there for small press and alternative comics than anybody can imagine.

In the past, small press comics were generalized as shoddy, black-and-white comics that followed the trends of the mainstream companies. But various alternative comics of recent years have expanded to include the innovative black-and-white artwork of creators like Julie Doucet (*Dirty Plotte*) and Seth (*Palooka-Ville*), as well as the lush production of Chris Ware's *Acme Novelty Library* and Peter Bagge's full-color *Hate*. The small press now has something to offer for everybody: realistic drama in Terry Moore's *Strangers in Paradise*, experimental works like Chester Brown's *Underwater* and Jim Woodring's *Jim*, highly original comics journalism like Joe Sacco's *Palestine* and *Our Cancer Year* by Harvey Pekar and Joyce Brabner, and even superheroes like Don Simpson's *Bizarre Heroes* and Jay Stephens' *Atomic City Tales*.

More and more creators are bringing their work to the small press. Established artists have been attracted to the freedom of experimentation the small press provides. Creators like *Tyrant*'s Steve Bissette and *Stray Bullets*' David Lapham have taken their work in exciting new directions. Innovative new artists have also appeared on the scene with fully realized talent, like Paul Pope with *THB*, and Adrian Tomine with *Optic Nerve*.

People outside the industry have recognized the accessibility of non-mainstream comics. One of the most widely acclaimed movies of the summer was Terry Zwigoff's *Crumb*, a documentary based on the life and creations of legendary underground comics pioneer Robert Crumb. Aside from critical acclaim from *The New Yorker* and *The New York Times*, the film won the Grand Jury Prize at the Sundance Film Festival.

Life Magazine's summer cover story on dreaming featured Rick Veitch's dream-inspired *Rare Bit Fiends*. Peter Kuper's *Give It Up!*, an adaptation of Franz Kafka's short stories, was reviewed favorably in *The New York Times*, and Kuper was featured as "Hot Comic Book Artist" in *Rolling Stone*'s annual Hot List for 1995.

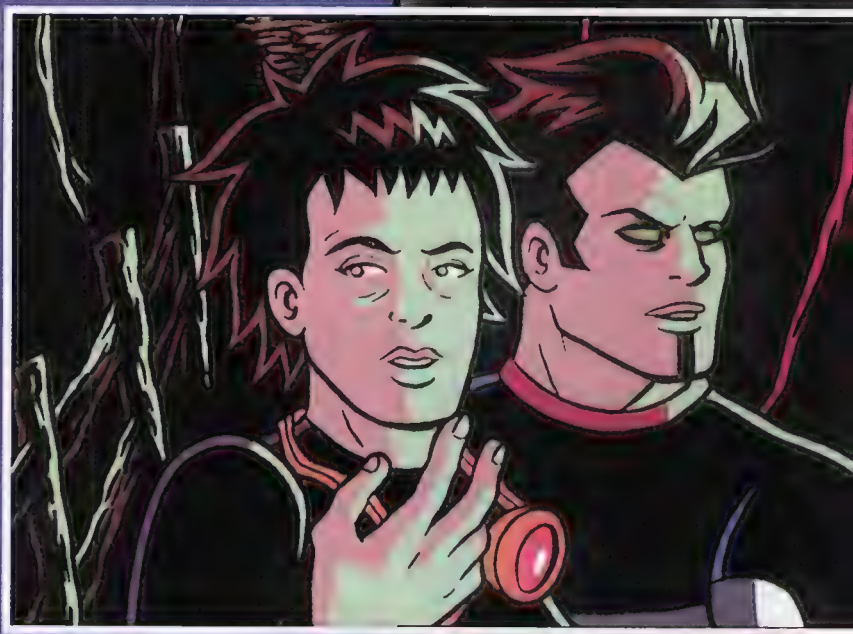
Comics from smaller publishers are also rapidly expanding into other media. Alan Moore and Eddie Campbell's chilling *From Hell* is set to make the jump to the big screen. An abundance of home pages for alternative comics have recently popped up on the World Wide Web. They range from a number of fan-based creations that spotlight Jeff Smith's *Bone*, Dave Sim's *Cerebus*, and Gilbert and Jaime Hernandez's *Love & Rockets* to slick presentations from publishers like Fantagraphics and Cat-Head.

The past year was full of exciting developments and fresh new faces, and 1996 will hopefully continue these trends. While some may fear that the future of comic books is uncertain, most believe that the medium itself will survive. *Tales of the Beanworld* creator (and consultant to Image Comics) Larry Marder says, "As long as there are people who create comics, and as long as there are people who read comics, there will always be comics." In fact, many creators believe the sky's the limit as far as the small press is concerned. *Rare Bit Fiends* creator Rick Veitch succinctly states, "We just might be moving into a Golden Age of alternative comics."

Generally, the offerings from alternative companies and self-publishers for the upcoming year will probably further the trend towards diversity that was apparent in 1995. A growing

There's a bigger audience out there for small press and alternative comics than anybody can imagine

Cover art from *Atomic City Tales* #2



by tom palmer jr.

number of creators who were once identified as strictly autobiographical artists, such as *Palooka-Ville* creator Seth, are taking the step into fictional stories. Other artists, like Chris Ware and *The Biologic Show*'s Al Columbia, are attempting to expand the capabilities of comics as an artform by experimenting with new methods of storytelling and design.

One of the things that is vital to the survival of the small press is the emergence of strong new talents. Paul Pope, creator of *THB*, one of the big breakthrough comics of 1995, realizes this: "I definitely think there is a strong need for intelligent and painstaking artists to come forward with work that is highly personal and individualistic." However, as Steve Bissette states, it can be very hard to spot the next big thing. "There's no telling where it's going to come from. That's the beauty of breakthroughs; they sort of catch you upside the head. They've been in your peripheral vision and you didn't really recognize they were there."

Above: Art from Kitchen Sink's *The Crow: Deadtime*. Below: Adrian Tomine's *Optic Nerve*

There seems to be no shortage of new talent set to break through the market in 1996. Fans of offbeat superheroes like Madman are sure to flock to Jay Stephens' *Atomic City Tales* from Kitchen Sink (as well as his *Land of Nod* series from Black Eye). Al Columbia's disquieting and darkly humorous comics from his *Peloria* graphic novel and the continuation of *The Biologic Show* are sure to find a huge audience. Storytellers like Jason Lutes (*Berlin*), Tom Hart (*The Sands*), and Jon Lewis (*Ghost Ship*) have the potential to take the art of comics to a new level. Self-publishers like Charles Vess (*The Book of Ballads and Sagas*), Marc Hempel (*TUG & buster*), and Rob Walton (*Ragmop*) also seem to be ready for something big in the next year.

Even though it is impossible to predict what the new year will hold, part of the fun and excitement is seeing where comics will go next. Hopefully, the small press will continue to play an important part in shaping the future of comic books. Here's a rundown on 1996's part of that future, from several small press publishers.

Kitchen Sink Press

Kitchen Sink has a number of top-notch comics planned for the upcoming year. Some of the highlights include a series of graphic novels collecting Scott McCloud's *Zot!*, the revival of two popular anthologies, *Death Rattle* and *Snarf*, and the resurrection of Will Eisner's most famous creation, (most presumably The Spirit, but Kitchen Sink wouldn't say), with different creators working with Eisner on new storylines. Other titles to watch for include:

The Crow: Deadtime—Crow creator James O'Barr supervises while other creators take their turn at his character with *Deadtime*, the first in a series of mini-series, featuring John Wagner writing, and newcomer Alex Malev on art.

Look for creators James Vance, Kyle Hotz and O'Barr himself on other mini-series.

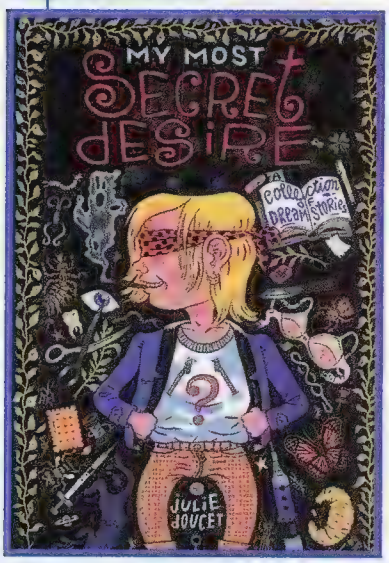
Atomic City Tales—Jay Stephens brings his wacky superhero stories to Kitchen Sink this spring in a regular series (with breaks between story arcs).

Xenozoic Tales—Creator Mark Schultz will release a new issue of his popular series this year, and will launch a series of three mini-series at the end of the year featuring the work of other creators.

Drawn & Quarterly Publications

A number of Drawn & Quarterly's popular creators will see their work collected in book format this year. Adrian Tomine's rare mini-comic work is collected in *32 Stories: The Complete Optic*

Nerve Mini-Comics, which should be out for Christmas of 1995. *Dirty Plotte*'s Julie Doucet collects some of her best dream stories for My Most Secret Desire, which will also feature



new work (including eight pages in full color). The spring release of *It's a Good Life if You Don't Weaken* collects Seth's story of his search for a lost *New Yorker* cartoonist and presents his work in a two-color format. Also, by the end of the year, the first six issues of Joe Matt's unflinching autobiographical *Peep Show* will be collected in full color.

Drawn & Quarterly will also publish work from a group of new creators in the coming year. The summer will see the launch of a series of square-format books, featuring complete stories from up-and-coming talent including mini-comic creator Ariel Bordeaux and Finnish cartoonist Penti Otsamo.

Many of Drawn & Quarterly's regulars, including Chester Brown's *Underwater* and Seth's *Palooka-Ville*, will continue with new storylines. Some of the line will be upgraded in the fall of '96: Issue #4 of *Optic Nerve* will be in partial full color, and *Palooka-Ville* will become two-color with issue #10.

Fantagraphics Books

1996 marks the 20th anniversary of Fantagraphics, and there are several big events planned. The biggest surprise is that *Love & Rockets*, Gilbert and Jaime Hernandez's pioneering alternative series, will end this spring with issue #50. Both creators will return in the summer with two all-new, separate series (both of which are currently untitled) in partial color. The birthday celebration will continue with a series of tours, each featuring a different pair of creators (possible match-ups include Los Bros Hernandez, Jim Woodring and Chris Ware, and Peter Bagge and Dan Clowes).

Bob Fingerman's *Minimum Wage*

The biggest highlight on Fantagraphics' schedule is its monthly series of new graphic novels profiling the work of promising new cartoonists. Some books to look for in the next few months include: Bob Fingerman's *Minimum Wage*, Ho Che Anderson's *Young Hoods in Love*, Carol Swain's *Invasion of the Mind Sappers*, Dave Cooper's Suckle: The Status of Basil, Renee French's *Another Peeled Frog*, Al Columbia's *Peloria* (featuring Pim & Francie), and Jeff Johnson's *Sad Brat, Bad Star*.

Slave Labor Graphics and Amaze Ink

Slave Labor, along with its Amaze Ink imprint, is dedicated to publishing the work of exciting new cartoonists. Some of the new faces and comics to watch for include:

Replacement God—Zander Cannon's light-hearted fantasy series for Amaze Ink is already creating a buzz.

Johnny The Homicidal Maniac—Jhonen Vasquez is also quickly gaining wider recognition for this darkly humorous book.

Scarlet Thunder—This realistic examination of two superspeed characters from Amaze Ink looks to be a sleeper hit.

Ghost Ship—True Swamp creator Jon Lewis launches this new series that will feature characters from *True Swamp* as well as all-new characters in separate stories.

Little Mister Man—Acclaimed mini-comic sensation James Kochalka bursts out with this hilarious dysfunctional superhero story.

Black Eye Productions

Black Eye's schedule looks very promising, considering the variety of highly personal comics it has on tap for 1996.

Berlin—Beginning in late spring, this ambitious series from acclaimed *Jar of Fools* creator Jason Lutes revolves around a journalist and an artist who meet on a train to Berlin.

Dear Julia—Brian Biggs presents this story of a man on the edge of his sanity. He believes he can fly, and intends to prove it while eight stories above a San Francisco street.

The Land of Nod—Jay Stephens returns to the humorous characters and storytelling that began his career with this quarterly series that begins in the spring.

Pickle—Dylan Horrocks continues his unusual exploration of New Zealand history and the comic book industry. A *Pickle* collection featuring previously unpublished material will be published this summer.

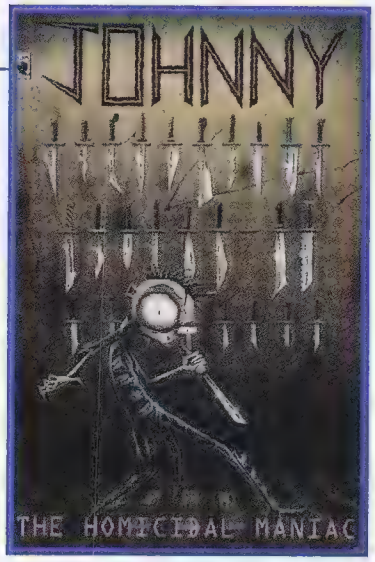
The Sands—New Hat's Tom Hart finally gets his own continuing series this spring. In the first storyline of the series, Hart tells the story of an older couple and the junk shop they run in a secluded desert town.

Self-Publishers

Some of the big names in self-publishing have some very exciting plans for the upcoming year:

SpiderBaby Grafix: *Tyrant* will be back on track in '96, and creator Steve Bissette hopes to release four or five issues this year. Also look for *SpiderBaby Comics*, a series that will reprint all of Bissette's creator-owned work.

King Hell Press: Following the release of *Rabid Eye*, the first collection of *Rare Bit Fiends*, Rick Veitch will serialize a new storyline, *Crypto Zoo*, which is drawn from dream diaries he wrote at the age of 20.



Horse Press: The prolific Paul Pope will release both *THB A* and *THB B*, collecting the main storyline in one trade paperback while presenting new material in the other. He also plans a comic magazine *Buzz Buzz*, and *Super Trouble*, a *THB* remix that will first see print from the publisher Kodansha in Japan.

Cartoon Books: The enormously successful *Bone* series will continue under the Image Comics banner, while Jeff Smith hopes to bring his creations to other media in the near future. The hardcover collections will also continue focusing on storylines, instead of re-presenting the paperbacks.

Aardvark-Vanaheim: After the highly anticipated 200th issue of *Cerebus*, Dave Sim follows up with a new storyline, "Guys," which might mark a return to the humorous stories of previous issues. Also, be on the lookout for a collection of the popular "Minds" storyline. **W**

Tom Palmer Jr. isn't really a sleaze. He just plays one on TV.

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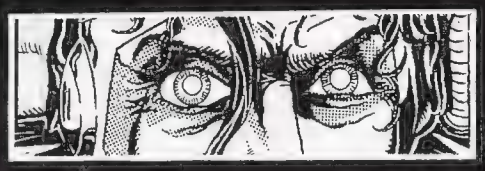


HEAD PRESS

PRESENTS:

ISSUE #1
ASK FOR IT...
DECEMBER '95

TEMPLATE IS TRADEMARK & COPYWRITE ROBERT LUEDKE.

TRAILER PARK

***Wizard*'s column about Hollywood and TV and stuff like that**

FOX Closes the 'GENERATION' Gap (as in tv-movie)

JUBILEE, SKIN AND M WILL BE CHARACTERS IN FOX'S GENERATION X MOVIE THIS JANUARY.

Look at your 1996 calendar: X marks the spot on Jan. 16.

That's the Tuesday the Fox Network has scheduled to broadcast a two-hour, live-action "Generation X" movie, based on the ultrapopular Marvel Comics characters created by Scott Lobdell and Chris Bachalo.

Production of "Generation X," a New World Entertainment movie, began in late October in Vancouver, Canada, just one week after casting was completed. Sources tell *Wizard* that both Fox and New World have "substantial" financial backing for the TV-movie, which will likely have a budget of more than $4 million and serve as a pilot for future "Generation X" movies or a regular weekly series. One source described the project as " 'Beverly Hills, 90210' meets mutants."

"It's going to be a very exciting show and a difficult one to film," said Stan Lee, Chairman of Marvel Films. "You have so many characters, and all kinds of wild and weird things going on. The story calls for lots of special effects."

After Marvel's immense animation success, Lee said he was excited to finally get a live-action project before the cameras.

"It's one of the first big ones we've really done, and done well," he said. "Although I thought the Hulk was well done, and the Doctor Strange film we did years ago was pretty good."

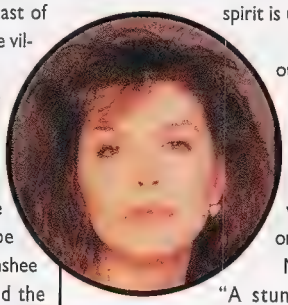
Eric Blakeney wrote the script for "Generation X." Blakeney, who created "21 Jump Street," another teenager-filled show from Fox, has brought a realistic approach to the movie.

"He's a good friend of mine and has done a terrific job," said Lee. "He's one of the first writers I met when I came out here."

Jack Sholder ("A Nightmare on Elm Street 2") is directing.

Matt Frewer ("Max Headroom," "Doctor, Doctor" and the current voice of the Pink Panther) headlines a cast of relative unknowns as the villain Russell Tresh.

The television "Generation X" team will include Banshee and the White Queen as leaders of the Xavier Institute, four members from the comics and two members who were created for television but will likely be appearing in Marvel comics next year. Banshee will be played by Jeremy Ratchford and the White Queen will be played by Finola Hughes, a television veteran perhaps best known for her work as Anna Scorpio on the soap opera "General Hospital."



Here's the Generation X team, with descriptions from New World:

Jubilation "Jubilee" Lee: "The youngest and newest addition to the team, Jubilee can't control the energy bursting out of her fingertips. She also can't believe she's a mutant."

Angelo "Skin" Espinosa: "Possesses the bizarre ability to stretch his six extra feet of skin to almost any length, but his strength of spirit is unrivaled."

Mondo: "A mountainous Samoan, [Mondo] can absorb the physical properties of anything he touches, but he has trouble coping when what counts is on the inside."

Monet "M" St. Croix: "A stunning beauty with incredible strength, [she] possesses an intellect

so highly advanced, she would have challenged Einstein; just ask her."

Arlee "Buff" Hicks: "A model/bodybuilder's dream, [she] has a powerful physique and lightning speed, but insecurity is her middle name—she can't even stand to look in the mirror."

Kurt "Refrax" Pastorius: "Can melt glass with optic beams and see through solid objects, although he just can't get serious about this superhero stuff; he'd rather try to see through women's clothes."

The cast includes Augustin Rodriguez as Skin, Heather McComb as Jubilee, Randall Slavin as Refrax, Amerilis as Monet, Suzanne Davis as Buff and Bumper Robinson as Mondo.

The story of "Generation X" revolves around the evil schemes of Tresh, a corporate maniac who is trying to use a complex dream machine to dominate mankind through the dream dimension. The White Queen happens to be partially responsible for Tresh's powers.

The young mutants, who are just learning to live with each other while trying to be heroes in a world that doesn't appreciate their help, must take on Tresh in a virtual dreamscape.

"Generation X" is the first new live-action television movie based on Marvel characters since "The Death of the Incredible Hulk" on NBC on Feb. 18, 1990. It is Marvel Films' first live-action project since the company re-focused its energy on television and movie projects nearly three years ago.

It probably won't be the last, either. "Generation X" is the first in a line of Marvel movies New World hopes to make for Fox. A script by David S. Goyer for "Nick Fury, Agent of S.H.I.E.L.D." has been turned in to the network, and Mel Friedman and Christopher Cosby are writing a Black Widow film. ■ *Rob Allstetter*

TEN MORE X-MEN

Good news for X-fans: the Fox Network is expected to order 10 additional episodes of the "X-Men" animated series, pushing the series total to 80, sources have told *Wizard*. This would mean new episodes will run into the 1996-97 season, the series' fifth, and perhaps beyond. If the order goes through, production at Graz Entertainment would continue into 1996.

"X-Men" continues to be the top Saturday morning draw in its fourth season. The series is also being shown in reruns on weekday afternoons. ■ *Rob Allstetter*

HULK EARNS IRON MAN GUEST SPOT

The Incredible Hulk, already featured in a fight with The Thing on the Fantastic Four portion of the "Marvel Action Universe" show, will also be appearing on the "Iron Man" cartoon this fall.

In an episode called "Hulk Buster," The Leader gets hold of two of the Mandarin's loose

WOULD *YOU* REFUSE THE HULK A GUEST-STARRING ROLE?

rings, which enable him to open doorways to the past. He plans on killing a young Bruce Banner in the past at the gamma bomb testing that turned Banner into The Hulk, and then taking his place to obtain The Hulk's strength. It's up to Iron Man and our time's Hulk to stop him.

The episode leads into a two-parter that ends Iron Man's second season. It's called "Hands of the Mandarin," and adapts many of the elements from 1995's *Iron Man/Force Works/War Machine* crossover. The Mandarin, fully empowered with all of his rings back, uses the Heart of Darkness to form an anti-technology field, and Force Works—Scarlet Witch, Hawkeye, Spider-Woman, Century and War Machine—reunites to help Iron Man and ally Su-Yin take on The Mandarin and his reformed team of villains.

There was no official announcement at press time, but sources tell *Wizard* it is likely "Fantastic Four" and "Iron Man" will be renewed for third seasons. ■ *Rob Allstetter*

COLUMBUS GETS ELEKTRA-FIED

Director Chris Columbus is coming closer to Elektra-fying Hollywood. While Columbus has made his reputation with such box office-busting family fare as the "Home Alone" movies and "Mrs. Doubtfire," his passionate determination to launch his favorite Marvel characters onto the screen has been well-documented. And now that he's actively immersed in writing the script for the Daredevil feature he plans to produce, that passion looks as though it's going to vaporize the barriers blocking Elektra from being part of the story.

Although the screen rights to Elektra have long been held independent of Daredevil by Oliver Stone's production company (Stone's company has yet to move forward on a film), Stan Lee recently noted that an agreement is in the works to give Columbus complete access to the ninjette assassin. "The problem is, Elektra's a great character, but she exists in the Daredevil world," Columbus noted. "It would be like doing a Spider-Man movie without Gwen Stacy. You desperately need Elektra. And to me, those Frank Miller books are like *The Bible*. I don't want to disappoint any Daredevil fans out there." ■ *Tom Russo*

NOTES AND QUOTES

Marvel Films President Avi Arad has confirmed that a Silver Surfer animated series is in development, to be aired on Fox sometime in the future. Hopefully, we'll have more details next month....George Clooney, who stars in NBC's top-rated series "ER" as Dr. Doug Ross, was expected to wrap up a deal to star in a live-action Green Hornet film. According to *Daily Variety*, the deal would have been for $3 million. Jason Scott Lee, who starred in "Dragon: The Bruce Lee Story," was the top candidate to play the Green Hornet's partner, Kato. In the "Green Hornet" television series from the 1960s, Bruce Lee played Kato. Production on the Green Hornet movie could begin this spring, when Clooney is on hiatus from "ER."..."The Crow: City of Angels," the sequel starring Vincent Perez, will now likely be released in the fall of 1996, not the spring as previously reported....Malibu and Universal Pictures were expected to close a million-dollar deal for the live-action film rights to Prime, the flagship character of Malibu's Ultraverse comics line. W

WILL WE SEE MALIBU'S PRIME ON THE BIG SCREEN?

All photos courtesy of Everett Collection

***Wizard*, by staying in touch with hundreds of retailers throughout the country, keeps a close eye on the country's hottest back issues. Here are November's hottest back issues.**

TOP 10 COMICS

1. X-MEN PRIME #1

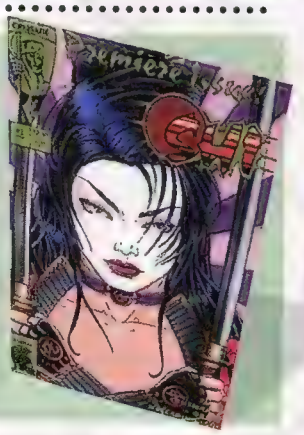
WRITERS: Scott Lobdell and Fabian Nicieza ARTISTS: There's a different artist for every freakin' page, almost!

What is this thing, an example of the "make your own super-hot book" formula from the X-Men department? Let's see, we've got your standard wraparound Chromium cover—that's always nice. Wolverine and Bishop both acting all moody and mysterious—okay, that gets my juices juicing. That new baddie Emplate is here, and he's pretty cool. Even X-Force, X-Factor, Excalibur and the Acolytes are in this thing! There's subplots flying everywhere! Oh, not to mention the pre-*Crisis* (or whatever) Beast and young Cable debut in regular continuity here. Hot stuff.

2. SHI #1

WRITERS: William Tucci and Peter Gutierrez ARTISTS: William Tucci and Barry Orkin

Perhaps one of the coolest introduction books we've seen in a while, this one reads like the new *Ghost Rider* #1 from a few years ago. We've got a way cool new babe of a hero that we've never seen before, and she's got honor, she's focused, she's deadly, she's...well, she's kinda nekkid in a panel or two, but, oh well, we're all adults here, aren't we? Well, let's hope for those of us who aren't adults that our parents are democrats. Anyway, seeing as how Shi is one of the more interesting comic book heroines and this baby's her first appearance, *Shi* #1 has become a cornerstone book in that whole "Bad Girls" insanity.

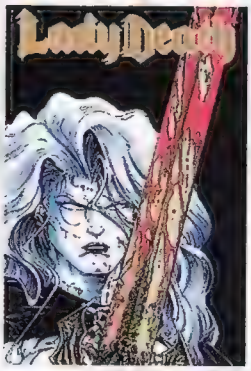


3. THE X-FILES #1

WRITER: Stefan Petrucha
ARTIST: Charles Adlard

This here's the premiere issue of the comic book about that super-cult-followed show "The X-Files," and it's got everything the show does. Scully loses some vital evidence because she's incompetent! Mulder had something that looks like proof that all of Christianity is based on aliens IN HIS HANDS but didn't read it! The Pope knows, the military knows, my little sister knows, but he doesn't! His bosses told him to drop the case! Why? We dunno! Yep, it's that whole "give 'em a mysterious plot twist every other minute" thing that *X-Files* does which keeps the viewers happy, and keeps readers of this comic hopping too.

NUMBER THREE



NUMBER FOUR

4. LADY DEATH #1

WRITER: Brian Pulido
ARTIST: Steven Hughes

All through those Evil Ernie one-shots, specials and whatevers we've read over the past few years, we've been asking ourselves one question: Who is that pale-faced woman with the big, beautiful eyes? Well, it took a while but Brian Pulido here decided to pump out a series just about her—Lady Death, that is—and the fans have voraciously eaten it up. It could be said that this book, where Lady Death narrates her origin story for us, is a cornerstone of that whole "Bad Girls"...whoa. *Déjà vu.*

NUMBER FIVE

5. VENGEANCE OF VAMPIRELLA #1

WRITER: Tom Sniegoski
ARTIST: Buzz

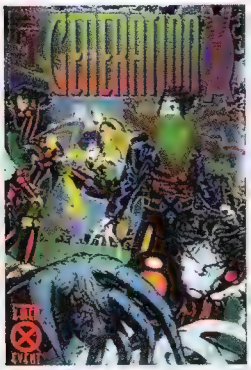
Though you couldn't tell by lookin' at her, this Vampirella chick is probably older than you or me. First appearing in '60s black-and-white horror mags, Harris resuscitated her and slapped her into her own ongoing color comic, and, in what appears to be the consensus of today's comic-buying audience, made her a perfect superhero. How so? Well, she's got claws, lots of blood all over the place and an impressive rack (just like what made Wolverine so popular). Anywho, with her revitalization, Vampi's become a cornerstone of, well, you know.

6. ASH #1

WRITERS: Joe Quesada and Jimmy Palmiotti
ARTISTS: Joe Quesada and Jimmy Palmiotti

Way back when, the art team of Joe & Jimmy caught their fans' eyes on the *X-Factor* series (X-books are always a nice place to be), and then launched *Ninjak* over at Valiant (Valiant *was* a nice place to be). Quesadilla's unique style and Jimmy P's super-tight inks made us drooling idiots for their books, and when the two guys went creator-owned, alla their fans followed. The Jimmy Palmiotti thong-and-tube-top centerfold didn't hurt either, making this a cornerstone in the Bad Boy craze.

NUMBER SIX

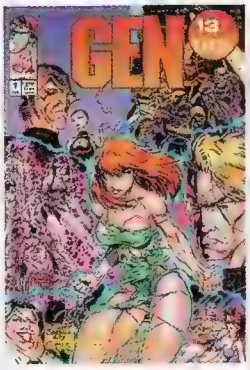


NUMBER SEVEN

7. GENERATION X #1

WRITER: Scott Lobdell
ARTISTS: Chris Bachalo and Mark Buckingham

What did we say was good about *X-Men Prime*? A Chromium cover, you say? Good. You're learning. What you also need to know about this book is that Scott and Chris did a great job introducing us to a new cast of X-Muties and their new villain, Emplate. So what if some of the characters' powers revolve around doing weird stuff with their skin? You should've seen what *my* skin could do back when I was 14! Now THAT was a mutation.



NUMBER EIGHT

8. GEN[13] #1 (MINI-SERIES)

WRITERS: Jim Lee and Brandon Choi
ARTISTS: J. Scott Campbell and Alex Garner

Well, this is where it all started, folks. Jim Lee's WildStorm Studios gave us a tightly-clothed team that we could all identify with. Young adults, trying to cope with life, getting along as friends and trying to have fun while being screwed over by a government superhero experiment. Well, being able to associate with three outta four ain't so bad. We...we don't know what it's like to have friends. Sniff.

9. X-MAN #1

WRITER: Jeph Loeb
ARTISTS: Steve Skroce with inkers Sellers, Smith, LaRosa and Conrad

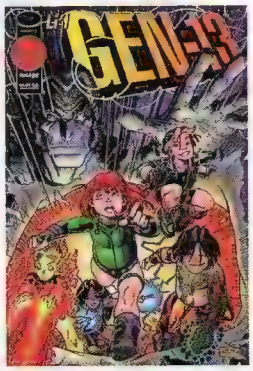
It takes more than four inkers to make a hit book, but *X-Man* still delivers. We X-fans have been head-over-heels crazy about any miserable alternate timeline that shows everyone being really messed up in an upside-down world, and we just got the most upside-downest of them all, "The Age of Apocalypse!" And better yet, this title gave us a young Cable, who happens to be running around normal continuity nowadays! Neat! If it had a wraparound Chromium cover, it might've been #1 on the list, but hey, maybe next time.

NUMBER NINE

10. GEN[13] #1 (REGULAR SERIES)

WRITERS: Brandon Choi and J. Scott Campbell
ARTISTS: Brandon Choi, J. Scott Campbell and Alex Garner

Yup, them wacky Gen[13] kids have just settled down to normal life, partying, playing video games, watching each other swim, partying, watching each other swim, and generally wondering about the future, when all of a sudden *BAM* they get into a major ruckus with extra-dimensional baddies in a disco! Hey, isn't this how the original Avengers started? This formula was hot in the early '60s and it's still generating heat now. W



NUMBER TEN

THE NEXT TEN

THE NEXT 10 HOT BOOKS AND THE COMPANIES THAT MAKE THEM

11. THEX-FILES #2 TOPPS COMICS
12. SHI #2 CRUSADE
13. LADY DEATH: B.H.A.H. #1 CHAOS!
14. DOUBLE IMPACT #1 H.I. STUDIOS
15. AMAZ. SPIDER-MAN #400 MARVEL
16. WEAPON ZERO T-MINUS-4 IMAGE
17. SUPERMAN/ALIENS #1 DC/DARK HORSE
18. SPAWN #1 IMAGE
19. AVENGERS: THE CROSSING MARVEL
20. RAZOR: BURN #1 L.N. STUDIOS

COMIC WATCH

BACK ISSUES TO KEEP YOUR EYE ON

Marvel Graphic Novel #4: The New Mutants

WRITER: **CHRIS CLAREMONT**
ARTIST: **BOB McLEOD**
PUBLISHER: **MARVEL**
RELEASE DATE: **1982**

Budding mutants Danielle Moonstar, Xi'an Coy Manh, Roberto Da Costa and Rahne Sinclair join forces to do battle with the Hellfire Club's malicious Donald Pierce. When the successful quartet forms the New Mutants under Professor Xavier's supervision, Sam Guthrie—who was tricked by Pierce into fighting the other teens—arrives at the Prof's door and is accepted as a fifth member. Guthrie, as mutant lovers all know, is Cannonball, the young man from Kentucky who can fly and explode through objects by blasting energy through his legs. He's also blasted himself from the New Mutants to X-Force to superstardom as a member of the X-Men. So how'd that last "promotion" happen? Well, the folks at the X-studios finally realized that they had a true winner on their hands for years, what with Cannonball's hot Cable connection (Sam's an immortal External for whom Cable came to our time), and the balance between his cool power and likability. So in *X-Force* #44, Xavier grabbed Mr. Guthrie and graduated him to X-Men status. Along with the other fairly popular youngsters, Sam first appears here, making this book a strong candidate for greatness. W

GOOD & CHEAP

GOOD READIN' BACK ISSUES YOU CAN BUY FOR PEANUTS!

BY MIKE SEARLE

Animal Man #5

WRITER: **GRANT MORRISON**
ARTISTS: **CHAS TRUOG AND DOUG HAZLEWOOD**
CURRENT VALUE: **$3**

"Looney Tunes," Animal Man, a deranged truck driver and God: What more can you ask for in a comic?

Animal Man #5 is downright bizarre...and very cool, in a strange sort of way. From the striking Brian Bolland cover to Grant Morrison's exceptional storytelling, this issue takes you to a Twilight Zone where the world of cartoons meets the hard edge of reality.

It starts off with a truck driver accidentally running over a Wile E. Coyote lookalike in the middle of the desert. The coyote miraculously survives (due to its special cartoon healing powers), and the truck driver, scared out of his mind, believes it to be a devil of some kind. Later, after attributing all life's miseries to "the devil," the driver heads back out into the desert to kill the coyote. (You gotta love the irony! A "road runner"—i.e., truck driver—trying to kill Wile E. Coyote!) Of course, Animal Man arrives on the scene—it's his book, after all—and the coyote gives his side of the story. The shocker ending will rip your spleen out!

If you want a comic that makes you laugh, cry and gag, all in the same few moments, this issue's the one for you. W

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PICKS

a listing of the hottest books as selected by the WIZARD staff, shipping in December

DC VS. MARVEL #1

Writer: Ron Marz
Artists: Dan Jurgens & Josef Rubinstein; Claudio Castellini & Paul Neary
Release Date: December 12
Cover Price: $3.95

DC COMICS/MARVEL Yep, we reached into the ol' Wizard's hat and pulled out this sure-to-be-overlooked little title. It's possible you've heard something about it by now, and then again you may be living on Mars. Over the course of this amazing four-issue monthly, comics fans will finally see the Big Two's biggest heroes just whaling the tar out of each other. And fans can vote on who wins the five biggest battles—Superman vs. Hulk, Batman vs. Captain America, Superboy vs. Spider-Man, Wolverine vs. Lobo, and Wonder Woman vs. Storm.

Writers Peter David and Ron Marz will alternate on the writing chores, with Marz leading off. The first issue sets the stage and throws everybody into the mix, says Marz. "This issue was maybe the most fun to write, because there are so many pieces I can play with," he says. "We get to see the universes coming together, how the characters shift from one side to another, and how they get paired up or pitted against each other."

The big guns, like Superman, Batman and Spider-Man, will remain at center stage, but fans will catch glimpses of many other interesting meetings, such as Supergirl and She-Hulk. "Some of the pairings will only receive a few panels, which will leave some events for the readers to think about on their own," Marz notes. "I see this story as a tapestry, where everything fits together but there are a lot of different elements. I hope all the parts are things readers have been thinking about for a long time but haven't ever had on paper in front of them before."

It won't just be heroes facing off, either. Such heavy hitters as Bane, Green Goblin, Joker, and Venom join the party as well. Next month, the preliminary bouts get under way.

LOGAN #1

Writer: Howard Mackie
Artists: John Paul Leon & Shawn Martinbrough
Release Date: December 12
Cover Price: $5.95

MARVEL "This marks the earliest that we've ever seen him," says editor Mark Powers about this 48-page bookshelf format one-shot featuring Wolverine's early years. Not only do we see his introduction to Rose, an important woman in his life, but it shows us what he was like before he became Weapon X and joined up with Creed, Maverick and the boys. "This is his introduction to a world where more things are possible than he'd ever known."

The story introduces Logan to some secrets behind Landau, Luckman & Lake, the mysterious company that's pivotal in his career. "Logan discovers they're not entirely benign guardians of the new technology they have at their disposal," Powers explains, noting that this technology gives them access to other dimensions. "They know it's dangerous and that everyone will be wanting it," he says. "So they're both guarding it and using it for their own ends." That results in Logan being thrown into another dimension, where he has to fend for himself. "It sounds weird, but it's actually a very cool story."

Even cooler, he adds, is the artwork by John Paul Leon and Shawn Martinbrough. "It's awesome," he says. Leon moves from this one-shot to *The Further Adventures of Cyclops and Phoenix* mini-series in March, so this gives readers a first look at his continuing X-Men artwork.

GEN^{13}/MAXX #1

Writer: Bill Messner-Loebs
Artist: Tomm Coker
Release Date: December 19
Cover Price: $3.50

IMAGE So how can a secret group of teenagers team up with a guy whose adventures take place in a woman's subconscious? That's a better question than writer Bill Messner-Loebs realized. "I thought I'd written a bulletproof plot, but when we got into the details of who knew what and where this occurs, it turned out to be more complicated." So Jim Lee, Brandon Choi and J. Scott Campbell poured over the plot, he says, "polishing and fine-tuning to get it right."

The story involves Mr. Gone, the Maxx's favorite bad guy. He kidnaps a bunch of kids, including a possibly Gen-active one. Most of the action takes place in another dimension, but not the one Maxx fans are used to. "The Outback is in Julie's subconscious," Messner-Loebs explains. "This takes place in someone else's subconscious, so we'll be seeing a whole new batch of weirdness."

All that will come to life under the pencil of artist Tomm Coker (*Vanguard*), who took up residence at the Homage Studio to ensure he got the nuances right. While most of the story takes place in the new dimension, the Gen^{13} kids also visit with Julie in the real world. "That'll be fun," says Messner-Loebs. "Especially when Freefall starts smoking in Julie's smoke-free office. They're both such accommodating women."

THE PHOENIX RESURRECTION

Writer: Ian Edginton
Artists: Various
Release Date: December
Cover Price: $3.95 each

MALIBU Malibu is being pretty cagey about this two-part series, both of which ship this month. It leads off with *The Phoenix Resurrection—Genesis*, in which someone becomes imbued with the Phoenix Force, and it winds up later in the month with *The Phoenix Resurrection—Revelations*, in which the Ultraverse and its heroes fight for their very existence. But when it comes to saying whether the Phoenix Force tags a man or woman and how they'll be affected, editor Hank Kanalz zips his lip. "That will be determined by the story, so I can't talk about it," he says maddeningly. (Last time, in the classic X-Men story, Jean Grey received the Phoenix Force and became a bit cranky by the end.)

After showing him the embarrassing pictures we'd taken at the last Malibu party, Kanalz furtively slipped us the list of X-Men who show up, and it's an impressive line-up: Wolverine, Storm, Rogue, Banshee, Jubilee, Beast, Bishop and Gateway. He adds that we'll see "just about everyone in the Ultraverse."

We'll also meet a new character called Foxfire, who receives her own series in February. Kanalz again clammed up about her powers, but he did say that she "won't be yet another Bad Girl. Foxfire has ties to the Ultraverse's past, and her sole destiny is to secure the Ultraverse's future."

STAR WARS: BOBA FETT—B.O.B.

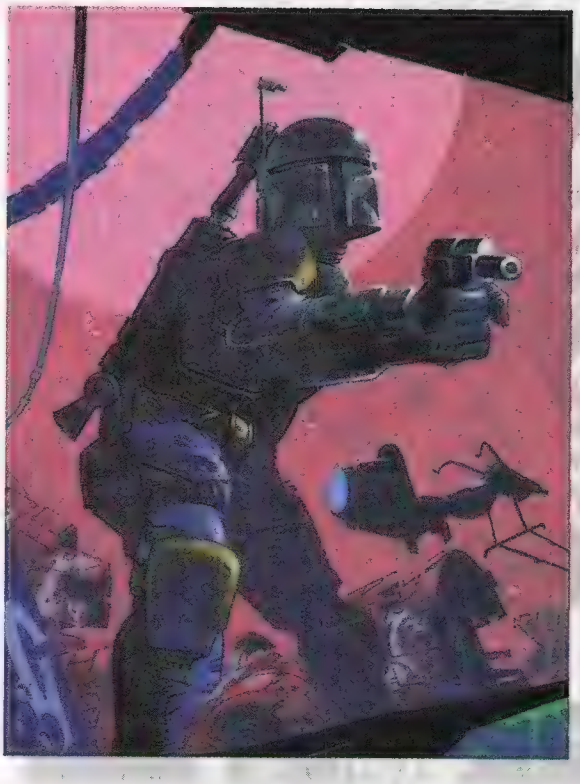
Writer: John Wagner
Artist: Cam Kennedy
Release Date: December 5
Cover Price: $3.95

DARK HORSE "This is the Boba Fett that fans have been clamoring for," says editor Jamie S. Rich about this 48-page one-shot. "We don't play him for laughs. He's still an enigmatic figure, but you see how he makes things happen. He's very aloof, but he gets the job done."

Would you expect anything less from the feared bounty hunter who delivered Han Solo to both Darth Vader and Jabba the Hutt? In *Boba Fett—Bounty on Bar-Kooda*, Fett undertakes a more complex mission, as two Hutts hire him to capture Bar-Kooda, a sharky-looking guy they're kinda peeved at. Kooda isn't too easy to call on, however, so Fett digs up some bait to get past his defenses. That appears in the person of Magwit, an intergalactic magician who earlier ticked off Kooda by not explaining one of his tricks. "Boba Fett makes a deal with the magician to get past Bar-Kooda's door," Rich explains. "But once that happens, Magwit learns that the terms of the deal are a little different than he probably thought." At that point, things really start hopping.

"This is really a high-paced adventure tale, with all the humor you expect from John Wagner," he says. "And the artwork is just beautiful. John and Cam had a good time doing this, and it definitely shows."

—Picks written by Craig Shutt



MORE PICKS

The following pages list the peachiest titles shipping in December, as selected and written by the *Wizard* staff.

AKIRA #38

MARVEL TETSUOOOOOO! This is it! Getcher wallets ready (and a box or two o' Kleenex), 'cause this is absolutely, positively the final shocking issue of this mega-epic tale. You can bet your fanny that this here issue's chock full of explosions, mutants, motorcycles and plenty o' dead people. There's also a special Otomo tribute section with work by Moebius, Bret Blevins and more. By Katsuhiro Otomo with Jo Duffy and Steve Oliff. **$6.95**

ASTRO CITY #5

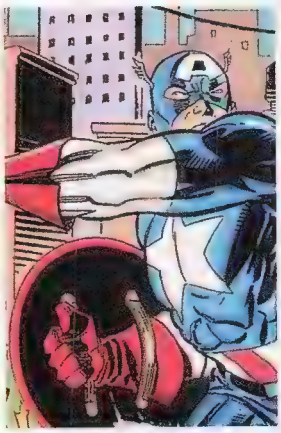
IMAGE This month's issue centers on Crackerjack, the most conceited superhero of all time. Ol' Cracker saves some alien spy's life, unaware that this spy is gathering info on Astro City in order to prepare for an all-out invasion of Earth. Hey, great going there, Crackerjackass! Somebody get Scully and Mulder on the horn! By Kurt Busiek and Brent Anderson. Busiek says, "The fate of the Earth hangs on one not-terribly-responsible superhero. I'm enormously happy with the kind of response we've gotten so far. I'm having a great time writing the kind of stories that I want to write and discovering that it's what the readers out there want to read too." **$2.25**

BATMAN BOOKS

DC COMICS Hey, didja know that Batman backwards is Namtab? Anyway, start your Batman month off right with the doubly dangerous *Batman* #527. Seems Two-Face has met his role model in Schism, a new guy with two brains, two minds and two souls. With him and Two-Face at large, Batman's gotta face trouble times two! When you've finished doubling your pleasure, get a hold of *Batman: Shadow of the Bat* #47. The Dark Knight takes on loony boy Cornelius Stirk and tries to prevent the recent Arkham escapee from eating the heart of Gotham's newest mayor. Rough town. Then feast your eyes on *Detective Comics* #694, where Batman and Robin must stop an eco-terrorist that's destroying all of Gotham's plants, and he's after Poison Ivy next! Also, there's a new police commissioner in town! (You don't think they'd bring back that Gordon fella, do ya? Naaaah...) You also might wanna check out the funky Elseworlds tale, *Batman: Dark Allegiances* by Howard Chaykin, which puts Batman back in 1936, fighting fascism's ugly head. **$1.95 EACH; *DARK ALLEGIANCES*—$5.95**

BATMAN BOOKS

BONE #22



CAPTAIN AMERICA #448

CHAOS! QUARTERLY #2

BATMAN AND ROBIN ADV. #4

DC COMICS Batman runs afoul of the Penguin at the Gotham Zoo, where ol' Birdbrain's trying to free all the exotic birds. Seeing as how bats and birds don't mix too well, the Penguin nabs some hostages to insure his escape. All that, plus Robin watches a monkey scratch itself. Bad monkey. Bad, baaaad monkey. By Ty Templeton and Rick Burchett. **$1.75**

BONE #22

IMAGE *"Take your powder, take your gun, report to General Washington..."* Phoney Bone forms his own militia out o' the villagers to prepare against any dragon attacks. Plus, seein' as how things don't look too good for Gran'ma Ben, she reveals ALL to Thorn, including everything she knows about the Lord of the Locusts, those wacky dreams and the Queen of the Dragons! By Jeff Smith. **$2.95**

CAPTAIN AMERICA #448

MARVEL "Operation Rebirth," Part 4 (of 4). If you haven't been reading Cap lately...well, that's probably 'cause he was in some dopey lame-o armor. But he's much better now, and so is this series. This double-sized issue concludes the rebirth of Captain America tale and reveals the fate of Sharon Carter, the Cosmic Cube and that nasty SOB the Red Skull. By Mark Waid and Ron Garney. **$2.95**

CHAOS! QUARTERLY #2

CHAOS! COMICS It's a plethora o' chaotic stories this month, including "Lady Demon" by Brian Pulido and Steven Hughes, "Robo-Evil" by Pulido and Bradley Parker, and more. An awe-

MORE PICKS

some Boris Vallejo cover wraps this baby up nicely. Also get your hands on *Evil Ernie: Straight to Hell* #3 (of 5), where Lady Death's walking around Earth. But since she's cursed never to do so until everyone is dead, that just can't be good! **$4.95—*CHAOS! QUARTERLY*; $2.95—*STRAIGHT TO HELL***

THE FLASH #110

DC COMICS "Dead Heat," Part 4 (of 6). No pun intended, but does Wally West ever have a slow day? If he's not turning into some Speed Elemental or something, he's off saving all of his friends' lives! Speaking of which, this ish sees Flash and Jesse Quick going foot-to-foot with Savitar and his pals, one of which is a former ally of Wally's! Continued in *Impulse* #11. By Mark Waid, Oscar Jimenez and Jose Marzan Jr. **$1.75**

GI JOE #1 (OF 4)

DARK HORSE "A real American hero...GI Joe is there. GGGGG...IIIIII...JOOOOE!" You can bet your sweet ass that this hero's back, though things are a bit different. For one thing, it takes place in the near future—the year 2010, to be exact. Military bases, research facilities and a number of other important plants are being sabotaged all across America. C.O.B.R.A., you say? Think again. This mini-series, which leads into an ongoing series, takes a whole new approach with GI Joe, including the new enemy S.K.A.R. (Soldiers of Kaos, Anarchy and Ruin). So now you know...and knowing is half the battle! By Mike Barr, Tatsuya Ishida and Scott Reed. **$1.95**

GREEN LANTERN #71

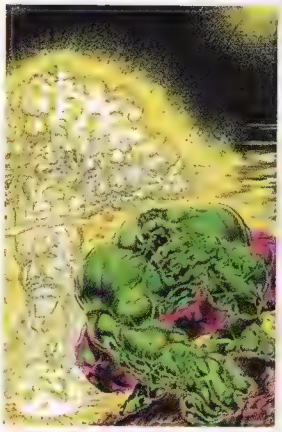
DC COMICS "Hero Quest," Part 1 (of 3). Like the good little amateur hero that he is, Kyle heads off across the globe in search of what a real hero should be like. His first stop's a real doozy: Gotham City, home of some duo in tights. Plus, leading up to issue #75 is a subplot that begins with a savage attack on Adam Strange's homeworld of Rann. By Ron Marz, Paul Pelletier and Romeo Tanghal. **$1.75**

IMPULSE #11

DC COMICS "Dead Heat," Part 5 (of 6). Flash and Impulse take one final jab at the maniacal speed demon Savitar, but it may all be in vain, seeing as how this'll be the final race for one super-speedster. The whole thing comes to a screeching halt in next month's *Flash*! By Mark Waid, Humberto Ramos and Wayne Faucher. **$1.75**

GI JOE #1

GREEN LANTERN #71



INCREDIBLE HULK #438

MADMAN COMICS #10

THE INCREDIBLE HULK #438

MARVEL "Ghosts of the Future," Part 3 (of 5). The Hulk's dying?! And only the Leader can save him? But the Leader's dead! Oh, boy. It looks like the only guy Hulkie can turn to is the evil Omnibus, but is the Hulk in over his head? By Peter David, Angel Medina and Robin Riggs. **$1.95**

KANE #12

DANCING ELEPHANT PRESS No, it's not that freakin' clone guy from the pages of Spidey, it's actually an awesome crime story. This issue sees mob boss Oscar Darke in critical condition at a local hospital following an unsuccessful hit. When a second attempt on his life is taken, it's up to Detective Kane to save him. That just might be a problem, seeing as how the two are not what you'd call friends. By Paul Grist. **$3.50**

MADMAN COMICS #10

LEGEND/DARK HORSE Y'know, this book is consistently one of the best reads around. What we've got this month is a whole swaggle o' robots under command of the mysterious Factor Max. Humanity doesn't have a prayer...unless you count Madman and his bunch of yo-yos. Plus, Alex Ross adds his marvelous touch to the cover and a few pics in the back o' the book. By Mike Allred. **$2.95**

THE MAXX #21

IMAGE You say you want more Maxx? You've seen 'im on MTV and want more, more, more?? Well, apparently there was a mix-up at the plant, 'cause what ya got is Moore Maxx. Alan Moore, that is. He guest-writes this month, taking the series in a completely new direction with a girl named Sarah and her Maxx. (Hmm...maybe The Maxx'll go around sayin' "Hurm" all the time...) By Moore and Sam Kieth. **$1.95**

MORE PICKS

PREACHER #11

VERTIGO/DC This series rocks! Following last issue's horrific events, Jessie seeks help from his ghostly mentor and gets himself ready for a mighty big face-off. Also, Tulip meets God. Yeah, *that* God. Now what the hell (oh, sorry) heck would you ask God given the chance? "Hey, God. About those French. What were you thinking?" By Garth Ennis and Steve Dillon. **$2.50**

ROBIN #25

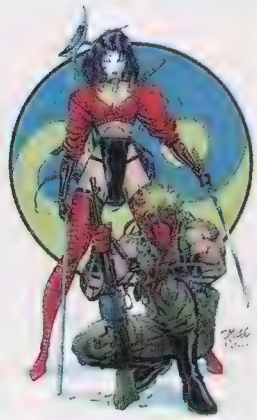
DC COMICS Green Arrow (or that guy goin' around saying he's Green Arrow) joins the gang this month as Robin attempts to solve the gun problem in Tim Drake's high school. Unfortunately, this tale concludes with the tragic death of a supporting character. Hmm…Alfred? Ariana? Or maybe even the Spoiler? By Chuck Dixon, Mike Wieringo and Stan Woch. **$1.95**

SHADOW STATE #1

BROADWAY COMICS Wendy and Troy are a loving married couple with just a few minor problems. Troy's in jail pining after his wife, while Wendy's off making waves with the pool man. You just know there's gonna be trouble when Troy's cellmate helps him escape! (Hey, wasn't this whole thing a topic on "Ricki Lake" a few weeks ago?) Also, check out *Powers That Be* #2, where the world sports a pretty negative view of the Chrysler Building incident. (Why would anyone feel that way about a Cadillac suddenly getting impaled on the building's top? People today…) **$2.50 EACH**

SHI: THE WAY OF THE WARRIOR #7

CRUSADE ENTERTAINMENT It's a huge bloodbath, when the vicious Tomoe leads the Nara Warriors throughout New York City attacking every crime family! What's worse, she leaves that little "Shi" symbol in blood at the site of each death. You know what that means…yep, ol' Ana Ishikawa's gotta put on her old battle gear and take down her former friend! By Bill "The Tooch" Tucci, Peter Gutierrez and Nelson Ascencio. And be sure to check out the awesome-lookin', oversized *Grifter/Shi* hardbound edition pairing up two of your favorite characters in an adventure where they try to stop a group of terrorists from obliterating one of Japan's biggest cities. By Jim Lee, Bill Tucci, Travis Charest and Troy Hubbs. **$2.50—*SHI*; $29.95—*GRIFTER/SHI***



GRIFTER/SHI

AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #408

SOLAR, MAN OF THE ATOM #60

SPIDER-MAN/ PUNISHER #1

SOLAR, MAN OF THE ATOM #60

ACCLAIM COMICS Hey, everybody, drop your drawers and grab your party hats, 'cause it's Keith Giffen Month over at Valiant! And it's about friggin' time! The skinniest man in comics brings his unique artistic and writing style to the Man of the Atom with a pretty devastating tale. Giffen says, "Solar's hobby seems to be blowing up planets, and yet—in what seems to be the current vogue for hyper-powered beings—he whines incessantly. He whines like an ugly girl on prom night. I figured maybe it's about time he realized that trying to get in touch with his lost humanity has been the cause of all his problems—that God's powers in man's hands doesn't work. It comes to a pretty radical conclusion, and I think the ending will absolutely startle everybody." Also, be sure to pick up *X-O Manowar* #61-#62, where Mr. Giffen and artist Andy Smith will be having their way with Aric and that whole suit o' armor thing. **$2.50 EACH**

SPAWN #40-#41

IMAGE Looks like besides not knowing how to count, McFarlane doesn't know how many weeks are in a month, 'cause we've got two spankin' issues o' *Spawn* this month! It seems a rejuvenated, rebuilt and pissed-off Curse is back and he's gunning for Spawn. Ol' Spawny guy finds himself trapped in Curse's den as the hellspawn and his living suit are experimented on. The whole thing hits its rock-'em sock-'em conclusion in issue #41. Also, you'll learn more about that nutty APE-X in the back-up stories presented in these two ishes. By Todd McFarlane, Tony Daniel, Kevin Conrad and Greg Capullo. **$1.95 EACH**

SPIDER-MAN BOOKS

MARVEL Sheesh, where to start? Well, for all you folks who went into hiding during that Clone saga thing, you can come out now. Apparently the whole thing's over. (Now where have we heard that before?) The one true Spidey is back and you can check him out in *Sensational Spider-Man* #1 with "Media Blizzard," Part 1 (of 3). This ish sees Spidey and his "wonder-

MORE PICKS

ful" new costume (You smell something?) take on the all-new Mysterio. God, does Spidey have any of his original villains left? The story continues over in *Amazing Spider-Man* #408 and wraps up in *Spider-Man* #65, where it's up to the wall-crawler to stop Mysterio before everyone in New York City becomes seriously addicted to that tool of the devil: television! (Now *there's* a stretch...) Also, check out *Web of Scarlet Spider* #4 for the conclusion to "Nightmare in Scarlet." The final issue of this story sees the monstrous Scarlet Spider and the all-new Spider-Man duking it out once and for all. Then *Spectacular Spider-Man* #231 brings back Spidey's nefarious foe Kaine! You might also wanna grab the two-part *Spider-Man/Punisher* crossover, in which the new Spidey meets the resurrected Punisher for the first time, and Punny's newest assignment with the mob is to off Spider-Man! Finally, wrap up your Spiderific month with *Untold Tales of Spider-Man* #6. So far, this has been one truly exceptional series with a great retro feel to it. This ish sees Spidey teaming up with his sometime rival, the Human Torch. **$1.95 EACH; $1.50—*AMAZING SPIDER-MAN, SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAN*; $2.95—*SPIDER-MAN/PUNISHER*; 99 CENTS—*UNTOLD TALES***

STORM #1 (OF 4)

MARVEL It's about freakin' time this X-Woman got her own mini-series! I mean, Rogue and Gambit have already had their shot, and Ororo's been around way longer than either o' them! Anyway, the Queen of the Skies jumps into the spotlight as she must rescue a poor young mutant from that evil, nasty Candra. Y'know, that villain we last saw in Rogue's mini-series. Is Ororo ready for a fierce battle? By Warren Ellis, Terry Dodson and Karl Story. **$2.95**

SUPERBOY #24

DC COMICS Silversword returns and he's out for blood! Lots of it! So, it's up to Superboy and his "partner" Knockout to put an end to his rampage. By Karl Kesel, Tom Grummett and Doug Hazlewood. **$1.95**

SUPERMAN BOOKS

DC COMICS Well, slap me silly, blow up my planet and give me a newfangled cape, it's Superman time! It's a regular shootout over in *Action Comics* #718, as Supes attempts to figure out who this new Demolitia chick is, 'cause her powers are reeeeeal similar to that dead guy Bloodsport's powers. Hmm... Then bring your eyes over to *Superman: The Man of Steel* #53, where thanks to a big bar brawl, Bibbo finally gets a shot in the ring! Look out, George Foreman! Also, some spooky stuff's going on over at the Daily Planet. The ghost sightings continue in *Superman* #109, but Superman's too busy fighting the crazy killer Kill Fee to play Ghostbuster (though bustin' would make him feel good). But for something truly scary, check out *Adventures of Superman* #532, where a certain Lori Lemaris returns...and this time, she's got legs! How can a mermaid get legs? We smell Ursula's hand in this...And that geek of a reporter Jimmy Olsen finally gets himself a hot new girlfriend! **$1.95 EACH**

STORM #1

SUPERBOY #24

TARZAN/JOHN CARTER: WARLORDS OF MARS #1

THOR #495

TARZAN/JOHN CARTER: WARLORDS OF MARS #1 (OF 4)

DARK HORSE What an awesome concept! The Lord of the Jungle is somehow transported to Mars, where he meets up with—yep, you guessed it—John Carter! How will Tarzan be able to cope without his fellow animals in a landscape he's unfamiliar with? By Bruce Jones and Bret Blevins. **$2.50**

THOR #495

MARVEL The end of "The Crossing" spills over into Thor's funky series. The Mjolnir-wieldin' hero is all set to trash some villains and play good guy. All while wearing his brand-spankin'-new costume! And, thankfully, it's at least better-looking than Spidey's new threads! By William Messner-Loebs and Mike Deodato Jr. That swell guy Messner-Loebs says, "Thor realizes that not only is he mortal, but that all of the influence of Asgard has disappeared. So he's finally gotten his greatest desire, which is to be human. And now he has to find out if that's what he ever really wanted. He is going to stay mortal for a long time. Finding out why this has happened, and where all the other gods went, will be something that will happen throughout the series past #500." **$1.50**

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MORE PICKS

VAMPS: HOLLYWOOD & VEIN #1 (of 6)

VERTIGO/DC Those gorgeous vampire biker babes are back in an all-new mini-series. This time the group heads out to ol' Hollywood, where Mink tries to get back to the acting career she abandoned when she became a blood-sucking creature of the night. But isn't it just a little too coincidental that the woman originally picked for the part which Mink's now playing, has somehow shown up dead? Hmm... By Elaine Lee and William Simpson. **$2.25**

WILDC.A.T.S #25

IMAGE It's a double-sized, Chromium-covered extravaganza! Hey, that means more Moore! Yeah, baby! Anyway, this ish sees the original team (now on Khera) falling apart as Zealot and Voodoo go at it in a big way. While back on Earth, the new WildC.A.T.s have to contend with a massive brawl between Hellstrike and Deathtrap that could have some pretty devastating results! By Alan Moore, Jason Johnson, Travis Charest, Kevin Nowlan and Troy Hubbs. **$4.95**

WONDER WOMAN #106

DC COMICS Things get a little wacky around the Amazon Princess as the Demon and the Phantom Stranger guest-star this month. And that old witch Morgaine LeFey goes after ol' Wondie in her quest for immortality. Geez, she's gotta be, what, like over 500 years old already? How much more immortal can ya get? By John Byrne. **$1.95**

THE X-FILES #13

TOPPS COMICS "A Boy and his Saucer." When a whole buncha kids start dropping like flies, thanks to radiation poisoning, Scully and Mulder jump in to see if it's related to the UFO the kids all believe they saw in the woods. But when the two investigators find the true killer, they realize they can never report the UFO to anyone! Y'know, this is like the first time a description of this comic actually makes sense. By Stefan Petrucha and Charles Adlard. **$2.95**

X-MEN BOOKS

MARVEL COMICS Hey, did all you kids catch the X-Men guest-starring on the Spider-Man cartoon a few weeks ago? It had a great showdown between Web-Head and Wolverine! Anyway, for some un-animated, but still exciting, tales, open up *Uncanny X-Men* #329, where Wolvie and Archangel happen to bump into Doctor Strange and fall into a mystic realm of NYC's underworld. Sounds spooky! Then over in *X-Men* #49, all those evil survivors from the "Age of Apocalypse" storyline go a huntin' for Bishop. Apparently, he knows too much... **$1.95 EACH** W

VAMPS: HOLLYWOOD & VEIN #1

WILDC.A.T.S #25

WONDER WOMAN #106

X-MEN #49

WHAT I'M READING

name: Peter David

occupation: Writer of Marvel's *The Incredible Hulk* and *Spider-Man 2099*, and DC's *Aquaman*.

currently reads: "*Sandman*, because of the complexity of the story and the mythic underpinning of the series that is pretty much unparalleled in any other ongoing series. *Cerebus*, because I've been with it since issue #1. I'm sure not going to put the book down now. *Bone*, because I think it's charming and there's no other series out there like it right now. *Groo*, because I love the same joke every month."

DeVries
Nelson
Scanlan
Patelis
DARE TO COMPARE!
MARVEL Masterpieces
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		#1 JAN. 1994	#1 OCT. 1994	#1 DEC. 1994	#1 JUN. 1995
Diamond		'94 Fleer Ultra X-Men	Marvel Masterpieces 1994	'95 Fleer Ultra X-Men	Ultra Spider-Man Premiere
Capital	BEST CARD SET OF 1993	'94 Fleer Ultra X-Men	Marvel Masterpieces 1994	'95 Fleer Ultra X-Men	Ultra Spider-Man Premiere
Heroes World		'94 Fleer Ultra X-Men	Marvel Masterpieces 1994	'95 Fleer Ultra X-Men	Ultra Spider-Man Premiere

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Peter Scanlan

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13. Cable
14. Cable
15. Cable
16. Captain America
17. Captain America
18. Captain America
19. Carnage
20. Carnage
21. Carnage
22. Cyclops
23. Cyclops
24. Cyclops
25. Daredevil
26. Daredevil
27. Daredevil
28. Dr. Doom
29. Dr. Doom
30. Dr. Doom
31. Galactus
32. Galactus
33. Galactus
34. Gambit
35. Gambit
36. Gambit
37. Ghost Rider
38. Ghost Rider
39. Ghost Rider
40. Hulk
41. Hulk
42. Hulk
43. Human Torch
44. Human Torch
45. Human Torch
46. Iceman
47. Iceman
48. Iceman
49. Invisible Woman
50. Invisible Woman
51. Invisible Woman
52. Iron Man
53. Iron Man
54. Iron Man
55. Jean Grey
56. Jean Grey
57. Jean Grey
58. Jubilee
59. Jubilee
60. Jubilee
61. Magneto
62. Magneto
63. Magneto
64. Mandarin
65. Mandarin
66. Mandarin
67. Mr. Sinister
68. Mr. Sinister
69. Mr. Sinister
70. Namor
71. Namor
72. Namor
73. Professor X
74. Professor X
75. Professor X
76. Psylocke
77. Psylocke
78. Psylocke
79. Punisher
80. Punisher
81. Punisher
82. Rogue
83. Rogue
84. Rogue
85. Sabretooth
86. Sabretooth
87. Sabretooth
88. Silver Surfer
89. Silver Surfer
90. Silver Surfer
91. Spider-Man
92. Spider-Man
93. Spider-Man
94. Storm
95. Storm
96. Storm
97. Thanos
98. Thanos
99. Thanos
100. Thing
101. Thing
102. Thing
103. Thor
104. Thor
105. Thor
106. Venom
107. Venom
108. Venom
109. War Machine
110. War Machine
111. War Machine
112. Wolverine
113. Wolverine
114. Wolverine

ARTIST PICKS

115. Black Panther
116. Black Cat
117. Blaze
118. Colossus
119. Cyber
120. Deadpool
121. Deathlok
122. Domino
123. Dr. Octopus
124. Elektra
125. Emplate
126. Green Goblin
127. Hobgoblin
128. Juggernaut
129. Kingpin
130. Lizard
131. Loki
132. Mephisto
133. Modok
134. Mojo
135. Mr. Fantastic
136. Mystique
137. Nightcrawler
138. Omega Red
139. Penance
140. Red Skull
141. Rhino
142. Sauron
143. Scarlet Spider
144. Shatterstar
145. She-Hulk
146. Skin
147. Spider-Man 2099
148. Strong Guy
149. Tyrant
150. Vision
151. Checklist

CANVAS

C1. Archangel
C2. Beast
C3. Bishop
C4. Cable
C5. Daredevil
C6. Galactus
C7. Gambit
C8. Ghost Rider
C9. Human Torch
C10. Iceman
C11. Invisible Woman
C12. Jubilee
C13. Magneto
C14. Namor
C15. Professor X
C16. Psylocke
C17. Punisher
C18. Rogue
C19. Silver Surfer
C20. Spider-Man
C21. Thing
C22. War Machine

HOLOFLASH

H1. Apocalypse
H2. Carnage
H3. Dr. Doom
H4. Mandarin
H5. Mr. Sinister
H6. Sabretooth
H7. Thanos
H8. Venom

MIRAGE

L1. Classic Avengers
Captain America
Hulk
Iron Man
Thor
L2. X-Men
Cyclops
Jean Grey
Storm
Wolverine

Preliminary checklist. Final card numbering sequence, character selections, and category designations subject to change prior to retail release.

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DC GETS OVERPOWERED!

First there was *Marvel OverPower*. Now there's a DC version as well.

Characters of the DC Universe enter the collectible card game fray this March as Fleer/SkyBox introduce the *Superman and Batman OverPower* card game.

The game consists of four starter decks: Batman (heroes deck), Batman Villains, Superman (heroes deck) and Superman Villains. Starter decks contain 55 cards and seven Mission cards, while booster packs consist of eight cards plus one Mission card.

A fourth power, Intellect, will be added to the existing *OverPower* Power Grids (Energy, Fighting and Strength).

"Since the abilities of the DC heroes transcend just brawn, we thought this would be the perfect opportunity to broaden the base of *OverPower* while introducing a new element to further challenge players," said Steve Seckar of Fleer/SkyBox International.

Starter decks include: Hero cards (Superman or Batman heroes or villains); Power cards (the basic unit of attack and defense); Universe cards featuring characters in normal circumstances; Special Ability cards; Ally cards which provide the ability to team up and fend off villains; and DC Mission cards (seven cards per deck which are not used in combat but help determine the outcome of the game.

Superman and Batman OverPower is compatible for interplay with *Marvel OverPower*.

• Also from Fleer, *Marvel Impact*, an entry level Marvel Universe set, will be available in late April.

• The second Marvel vs. DC/DC vs. Marvel card set—entitled *Amalgam*—is scheduled for March 20.

SKYBOX

The premiere edition of the *Batman Master Series* from Fleer/SkyBox International will feature original art from Dave Dorman, Scott Hampton, Ken Kelly, James Warhola and Carl Critchlow.

The 90-card set features extra-thick card stock, foil stamping and UV coating on both sides and is scheduled for late January release.

Chase cards include: 1) Artist's Proofs featuring the artist's signature in gold foil (one in every pack); 2) 10 foil-stamped Master Villain Cards (approx. one per pack); 3) Six Batman Fantasy Spectra-Etch cards by fantasy artists such as Ken Kelly, Joe DeVito and James Warhola (approx. one in six packs); 4) Two Batman Chromium cards—Batman by Dave Dorman and the Joker by Carl Critchlow (approx. one in 18 packs); and 5) Batman ClearChrome which are images from the Chromium set on ClearChrome cards (approx. one in 99 packs).

Each eight-card pack carries a suggested retail price of $2.99.

• *The Prophet Collection* is unveiled in January with 36 pieces of art based on the Image Studios comic. Artists featured include Stephen Platt, Rob Liefeld, Greg Capullo, Jim Lee, Todd McFarlane and Sam Kieth.

Three double-sided wiggle cards showcase original art, and a single model image hologram card was created exclusively for the set.

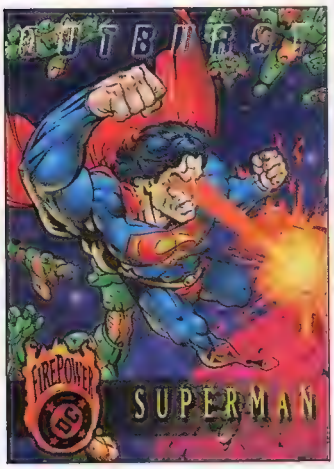
Six-card sets retail for $1.69.

• *Power Chrome: DC Legends '95* trading cards debuted in November—a 150-card set that marks the first time DC Comics characters are captured in an all-chromium set.

Characters included in the set are Superman, Wonder Woman, the Riddler, Lex Luthor, Batman, Green Lantern, Catwoman, Supergirl and Two-Face.

Bonus cards include 18 Hard Hitters cards (approx. one in every two packs), six Battlezone cards featuring ClearChrome technology (approx. one in 11 packs) and Legacy cards with refractory chrome technology (approx. one in 36 packs).

DC heroes and villains are featured in the Hall of Heroes, Justice Corps, Solo Quest, Overdrive, Terror Instinct, Univer-



"Oxycute 'em!" SkyBox's *DC Firepower*.

Start the new year in a dark way with SkyBox's *Batman Master Series*.

There's mice, pumpkins, slippers and ugly broads! *Cinderella* by SkyBox.

sal Forces and the Sovereign Seven subsets.

Suggested retail price for *Power Chrome* sets is $2.99 for a nine-card pack.

• The leading characters of the DC Universe make their debut in February with the premiere edition of the *Outburst DC Firepower* embossed card set.

• *Cinderella* trading cards coincided with the Disney re-release of the classic animated movie in October. The 90-card set features characters and images taken directly from the original 1950 film.

• Nov. 22 sees the release of *Toy Story* trading cards based on the first-ever completely computer-animated Disney film of the same name.

COMIC IMAGES

The *William Stout: Saurions and Sorcery* set, due out in January, will feature 90 cards from such diverse topics as dinosaurs, Antarctic life, aliens, movie posters, album covers, satire and spoofs. Bonuses include six Chromium chase cards, a three-card subset of rare art, and an autographed card.

Each 10-card pack carries a suggested retail price of $0.89-$1.09.

• The *Boris with Julie* set spotlights 90 all-new, all-chromium Boris Vallejo cards with a 10-card special appearance by his wife and fellow fantasy artist Julie Bell. Bonuses include six MagnaChrome cards, a three-card subset of rare art, and autographed cards (250 from Boris, 250 from Julie).

Seven-card packs have a suggested retail price of $2.29.

INTREPID

The first series starring Dale Keown's Pitt debuts in January.

The 99-card regular set features original art from Keown as well as guest art by Peter David, Jim Lee, Joe Chiodo, Frank Frazetta and more. The set includes 18 character cards, nine Creed Menace cards, 27 guest artist cards, 36 battle cards and nine axiom enterprise cards. Among the chase card highlights are nine Ashcan character cards, nine Ashcan cover cards, six holoforge cards in a 3-D holographic spectacle, three siliconite cards (double-sided acetate cards highlighted in foil), and a Roarsome Pitt Megamotion Card, featuring Keown's first animation effort that displays 24 frames of Pitt action in one awesome card.

Suggested retail price for seven-card packs is $2.25, with collectors' albums available for $19.95. W

All this card news was compiled by the jovial Wizard *staff.*

"Anyone got any floss?" Intrepid's Pitt.

InQuest presents

HIT THE DECK

The latest in collectible card game news

• Kirk and company are back! Corresponding with the 30th anniversary of "Star Trek," SkyBox will be releasing ***Star Trek: The Original Series*** CCG sometime in the summer of '96. We can only hope there's a Gorn card.

• DC's shot at ***OverPower*** should be out in March of next year. While we're waiting for that, the Marvel side of things is going quite strong. Fleer'll be releasing ***PowerSurge*** in December—*OverPower*'s first expansion set, featuring 21 new superheroes and villains, including Daredevil, Juggernaut and Ghost Rider. Not to mention that there's now a toll-free phone number for *Marvel OverPower*, (800) OPRULES (677-8537), which fans can use for rules questions, card combinations and more.

"Say it, don't spray it, Bones." SkyBox's *Star Trek*.

• As of Nov. 1, ***Magic* has a new set of tournament rules.** Added to the banned list: Channel, Chaos Orb and Falling Star; *Ice Age*'s Zuran Orb has been tacked on to the restricted list; plus, Summon Legend cards are now unrestricted in deckbuilding (maximum of four). Even more importantly, the Type II tournament format has been modified. The official tournament list has been expanded to include the following: Fourth Edition (the basic *Magic* set), *Chronicles*, *Ice Age* and *Fallen Empires*. Sets will not be removed from the Type II list until they have become widely unavailable, so *Homelands* will be added to the list but will not replace any current card set.

• Back in August, *Rage*'s first expansion set, *Umbra*, successfully augmented an already-vast and rich universe. Now, ***The Wyrm***, *Rage*'s second expansion, seems to be doing it again. *The Wyrm* allows players to control the "evil" side this time around, as Wyrm packs will have their own characters, their own targets in the Hunting Grounds (victims), and their own version of moots (board meetings). Look for more than 30 new characters and over 180 cards!

• Finally, the long-awaited ***Star Wars*** CCG is due in early December. Be prepared to accept either the "light" or "dark" side of the Force, as you'll be able to customize your decks with either good or evil cards to represent the rebels or the Empire. The basic set (324 cards) will be followed by four expansions: *A New Hope*, *The Empire Strikes Back*, *Return of the Jedi* and *Shadows of the Empire*. Art will be high-quality film shots from the original "Star Wars" film (similar to the production level of *Star Trek* CCG cards). ■ *Michael Searle*

Michael Searle is the editor of Wizard*'s sister mag* InQuest, *the all-around grooviest guide to collectible card games.*

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_____

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X-FILES, X-FILES, X-FILES

The single hottest television tie-in comic series of our time, possibly of all time, is *The X-Files* published by Topps Comics. Practically the whole run moved up in the price guide: #1 to $42; #2 to $26; #3 to $9; #4 to $8; and so on. The all-new Friday night episodes running on Fox are as good—if not better—than last year's season, and collectors are responding by clamoring for anything and everything to do with the show.

BAD GIRLS RAGE ON

Let's see, we have Shi, Lady Death, Lady Rawhide, Cynder, Dawn, Angela, Vampirella, Avengelyne, Satanika, China & Jazz, Vamperotika...have we left anyone out? Bad Girls are all the rage these days, but one must wonder how long before the market is flooded. Or are we already drowning in a sea of babes? Right now, it seems like all a publisher has to do is put a sexy, huge-chested babe having a bad hair day on a book's cover and, presto, major success story!

by Jon Warren

Everyone who's anyone wants to get their hands on *X-Files* (above). Old *Star Trek* (left) comics are taking the galaxy by storm.

TREKKIES UNITE!

X-Files may be the hottest television tie-in series, but *Star Trek* isn't far behind. You could even say it's hotter than a Dilithium crystal at Warp 10! (Of course if you did say that, everyone'd call you a Trekkie geek.)

Demand for anything pertaining to "Star Trek" continues to drive prices for *Star Trek* and *Star Trek: The Next Generation* comics to new frontiers, to places no series has gone before.

The first comic book series, published by Gold Key and based on the original TV show, is the coolest because the first nine issues sport super photo covers of the original cast. You may not agree that they're the coolest, but you can't deny they're the most valuable. Issue #1 moved up to $425 this month. The second *Star Trek* series, published by Marvel in 1980, isn't worth major bucks but it's still a great buy at its current level. Issue #1 moved up to $7 this month. For a 15-year-old comic book, that's pretty cheap.

POWER OF THE PEOPLE

"I hope *Wizard* realizes the power it wields over the comics market, and uses it wisely. Sometimes I think you guys make a comic book hot just by saying it's hot in *Wizard!*" says Bobby Newsome of San Diego, Calif., the most recent spouter of the *Wizard* mind control theory. This sentiment is constantly echoed by a lot of our readers. But besides it being not true, there's much more to it.

A lot must happen before we raise a book above cover price with one of those little red bars. Here's how *Wizard* and the comics market itself work: A new comic, let's call it *Too Darn Scabby* #1, is released by a new comic book company. *Wizard* lists it at cover price in the guide, like we always do. It turns out that lots of comics fans think *Too Darn Scabby* #1 is really cool, and retailers sell out at cover price. They try to reorder, but the book is a national sellout. The poor, luckless fans who didn't get a copy feel deprived, and resolve to find a copy, even if it means paying over cover price. They go to their friendly comics shop and tell Mr. Retailer to get them a copy of that comic, no matter what. Mr. Retailer digs up a few copies, which he prices at a fair price. They sell out immediately.

Mr. Retailer thinks to himself, "*Too Darn Scabby* is hot," and searches for more, paying a higher price this time. Remember, the book has only been listed in *Wizard* at cover price so far, but the retailer is paying above cover price to restock. Next, like we do every month, *Wizard* mails thousands of surveys to retailers around the country. Mr. Retailer writes, "*Too Darn Scabby* #1 is hot," and mails the survey back to *Wizard* headquarters.

And hundreds of other retailers around the country report the same thing. Then we average all the *Too Darn Scabby*

#1 prices and come up with the new price guide price, which we duly list in the next issue of *Wizard*. Thirty days later, the whole process starts all over. If retailers keep reporting strong demand for *Too Darn Scabby* #1, we keep reporting it to you, our readers. If the retailers stop reporting strong demand, so do we.

And that's how it's done.

ALL THE BOOKS THAT FIT TO PRINT

Just because a title isn't listed in the price guide doesn't mean the price guide sucks. We get a few letters each month asking us why we don't list *Leave it to Binky* and many other lesser known titles in the price guide. With hundreds of new titles shipping every month, we'd never be able to fit the last 50 years of comics history in every issue of *Wizard*. No price guide on the planet could list them all. We'd need a twenty-four volume set of price guides. Here's the rule: If it ain't in the monthly price guide, it is not on anyone's most collectible list.

There are many other titles listed in the *1996 Wizard Annual* (on sale now!) which has a 200-page price guide, but if it's not in there, then for sure no one's looking to find it. In many cases, it may even be worth less than its original cover price. So, you can stop sending all those letters asking why *Leave it to Binky* or any other lame titles might not be listed in the price guide.

COMICS BELOW COVER?!

A lot of irate readers have been taking us to task for dropping prices on dead titles below cover price in the price guide. Some have said no comic should ever be worth less than cover price, as if all comic books are cherished by all. This is just not true! You can

WIZARD'S TOP TEN HOTTEST ARTISTS

Al Ortega

1 **Todd McFarlane**
Spawn

2 **William Tucci**
Shi

Al Ortega

3 **Joe Quesada**
Ash

Al Ortega

4 **Jim Lee**
Gen13 #6-#7

Al Ortega

5 **Frank Miller**
Sin City: Silent Night

Jim Gund

6 **Adam Hughes**
Ghost

Jon Gipe

7 **Steven Hughes**
Lady Death

Al Ortega

8 **Marc Silvestri**
Witchblade

9 **Greg Capullo**
Spawn

J. Schuyler

10 **Adam Kubert**
Wolverine

WIZARD'S TOP TEN HOTTEST WRITERS

Al Ortega

1 **Peter David**
Incredible Hulk, Aquaman, Spider-Man 2099

Al Ortega

2 **Neil Gaiman**
Sandman

Al Ortega

3 **Frank Miller**
Sin City: Silent Night

Bob Martin

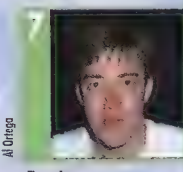
4 **Alan Moore**
Violator, WildC.A.T.s

Al Ortega

5 **Chris Claremont**
Sovereign Seven

Al Ortega

6 **John Byrne**
Wonder Woman


Al Ortega

7 **Dan Jurgens**
Superman, Sensational Spider-Man

J. Schuyler

8 **Scott Lobdell**
Generation X, Uncanny X-Men

Al Ortega

9 **Jeff Smith**
Bone

10 **Mark Waid**
Captain America, Flash, Impulse, upcoming: X-Men

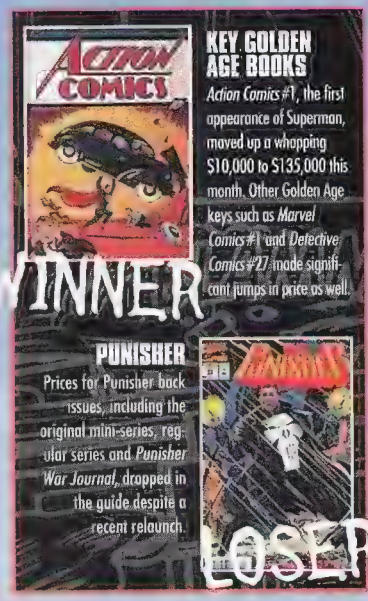
WIZARD'S TOP TEN HOTTEST ARTISTS AND WRITERS LISTS ARE DERIVED FROM A NATIONWIDE RETAILER SURVEY.

WIZARD'S UP & COMING CREATOR

STUART IMMONEN

Surprising fans right from the start with his fine work on DC's current *Legion of Super-Heroes* series (Check out his issue #611), Immonen gave new meaning to the word "style" when he took on *Adventures of Superman* with #520. His flowing figures and spirited scenes quickly become perfect for Supes and company, giving the series a new, exciting personality, and Immonen himself a huge group of fans.

WIZARD'S WINNER AND LOSER OF THE MONTH



KEY GOLDEN AGE BOOKS

Action Comics #1, the first appearance of Superman, moved up a whopping $10,000 to $135,000 this month. Other Golden Age keys such as *Marvel Comics* #1 and *Detective Comics* #27 made significant jumps in price as well.

PUNISHER

Prices for Punisher back issues, including the original mini-series, regular series and *Punisher War Journal*, dropped in the guide despite a recent relaunch.

MARKET WATCHERS

Letters to the Price Guide

We get hundreds of letters each month and can only print half a dozen or so. If you expect us to personally answer your questions, you should include a self-addressed stamped envelope with your letters. We still can't guarantee an answer, but you'll have a much better chance of getting a response.

Dear Jon,
I have a *Star Wars* #1 with a UPC symbol and a 30-cent cover. The price guide says the one with the UPC symbol and the 35-cent cover was worth $375. I was wondering, is mine the rare one or the more common one?

Damian Radley
Reedville, Penn.

Damian, you obviously have some poor reading comprehension skills. The price guide is correct; the *Star Wars* #1 with the 35-cent cover price and the UPC symbol at the lower left corner of the front cover is the one that is currently weighing in at $375. The version you have with the 30-cent cover price is the regular edition, but it has been on the move upward lately.

Dear Market Watchers,
We've got a book that's not listed in the guide that we think should be. It's *Evil Ernie* #1 "Special Limited Edition." It was published by Malibu Comics, under their Adventure Comics imprint. We don't know why it wasn't still a Malibu/Eternity book like the other five issues of the mini-series, but it wasn't. It was released just two months after the mini-series concluded, and is dated June 1992.

Basically, we know that "Special Limited Edition" just means that it's a second printing of the original *Evil Ernie* #1. But this version also included 16 extra pages, including a sketchbook by Steven Hughes and some other cool stuff. We know how tough it must be for you guys to run the price guide each month and still keep all the important prices up to date, but since the first printing is already over $100, isn't it time for a listing at least mentioning this second print?

Jason Dickson
Patrick K. Smith
Maryville, TN

Holy omission, you're right! The "Special Edition 1A" (2nd print) will be listed in next month's price guide. I checked with a few of our VIP Advisors and they tell me the book sells in the $20-$30 range. I'll add it to our national retailer survey and see what happens. Thanks for pointing this out.

Let me take this opportunity to ask all you fellow Market Watchers out there ask any retailer in America if he'd take half cover for his leftovers and he'd say, "Hell, yes!" Go to any major comic book convention and you'll find table after table of recent comics below cover price. You can go to convenience stores, or Wal-Mart for crying out loud, and find three-packs of comics for less than cover price. It's a fact of life that comics can and do sell for less than cover.

THE QUICK LIST:

• *Shi*—(Crusade Entertainment). Continues to be a leader in the Bad Girl genre with issue #1 moving up to $32; #2 to $19; #2A, the San Diego commemorative issue, up to $32.

Shi continues to dominate the Bad Girl scene.

• *X-Files*—(Topps Comics). Like we said earlier, the series is hot and rising in value. Price increases this month: #1 to $42; #2 to $26; #3 to $9; #4 to $8.

• *Lady Death*—(Chaos! Comics). #1 moved up to $72 this month; #1A, the limited gold version, moved up to $110; #1 ashcan moved up to $15.

• *Vengeance of Vampirella*—(Harris Comics). Continued strong demand; #1 moved up to $28; #1A gold version to $50; #2 to $18.

• *Captain America*—(Marvel Comics). Early issues from the Silver Age took a dip in price this month, due to weak demand and price cutting.

• *Double Impact*—(High Impact). Strong demand saw the limited-edition issues move up this month.

Action, teenagers and skin means instant success for these Gen[13]ers.

• *Evil Ernie*—(Eternity Comics). Lady Death appearances are certainly fueling demand for this series. Issue #1 moved up to $115; #2 to $90.

• *Gen[13]*—(Image). Both the mini-series and the regular series are still very popular, but only minor price adjustments this month.

• *Razor*—(London Night Studios). *Annual* #1, the first appearance of Shi, moved up to $42.

• *Star Wars*—(Marvel Comics). The original Marvel series is super hot. Prices moved up across the board for the second straight month: #1 up to $36; #2 to $16, #107 (the last issue) to $28. And just wait until the next crop of movies comes out! W

Jon Warren likes men in tights.

to help us add other books from hot series to the price guide. If we've left something out of the guide, and it's a book from a hot series (we leave lots of dead stuff out of the guide on purpose), write and let us know. Even better, send us a photocopy of the front cover.

Dear Market Watchers,
I was up in my attic the other day and found an old DC comic in very poor condition. It's a *Limited Collectors' Edition*, vol. 4, #C-34 (Feb.-March 1975). Its called "Christmas with the Super-Heroes," and it features Superman, Batman, Shazam! and the Teen Titans in various short adventures. Could you tell me what it's worth in Mint or Near Mint?

Thanks a lot!
Nate Danilowicz
Catawissa, PA

Our *1995 Wizard Annual* lists its Near Mint price at $8. Check out our *1996 Wizard Annual* in November for its latest value. *The Limited Collectors' Edition* series was a really cool set of oversize (10" X 13") comics introduced by DC in 1973. Thirty-four issues were published from 1973 to 1978, including a comic book version of *The Bible*! But, for a real hoot, the prize has to go to issue #C-57, "Welcome Back, Kotter"—remember that TV show?

Dear Market Watchers,
I regularly read this magazine—especially the price guide. It helps me a lot to identify good comics from bad ones, and gives me information on new and old comics. But I have discovered some problems with the guide that have spawned the following questions:

1) I've noticed that the price guide does not list the new issues of some comics. In *Wizard* #45, this includes issues of *Aquaman*, *Catwoman* and *Guy Gardner*; in *Wizard* #48, issues of *Thor*, *Thunderstrike* and *Spectacular Spider-Man*. These mistakes lead me to believe that issues of these comics didn't come out that month, when, in fact, they did. I would like to know why this happened.

2) I've also noticed that there have been no price listings for DC's *Black Lighting* and Marvel's *ClanDestine* in your price guide for some time. I realize these titles aren't exactly top-sellers, but they are ongoing monthly comics, and deserve to be covered.

One more thing: Try to write at least *something* for every new comic. In recent listings for DC's *Fate*, you didn't write anything about the new issues. Don't do it again—it's disturbing and distracting! Thank you for your cooperation, and please try to answer my questions.

Shawn Marek
Cheektown, NY

I'll do my best to answer:

1) If a title is listed in the price guide, we always list the latest issue each month. Either you're wrong or someone goofed on our end. Either way, it's okay to not be perfekt.

2) Lots of ongoing series aren't listed in the price guide. All you *Black Lightning* and *ClanDestine* collectors should form a protest group and demand your listing in the price guide. If enough of you scream and yell, we'll be forced to buckle under from the public outrage and list those titles. Just don't tell all those *Anima* fans out there, okay?

3) I'm not exactly sure what you mean by your last statement. I think you mean that we listed the new issue without making our usual cute comment about the story. If we don't comment on your favorite new issue, don't get mad. Remember, hundreds of new comics are released every month and we can't possibly read them all. Give us a break.

Dear Market Watchers,
Why is *Deathmate Black*—the *first* (as in *ever*) appearance of Gen^{13}—only worth $7.50, when *Gen^{13}* (mini-series) #1 is worth 40 freakin' bucks? *Amazing Fantasy* #15 (1st Spider-Man) is worth $5,500 more than *Amazing Spider-Man* #1!

David London
Rowlett, TX

It's the ol' supply and demand thing, David. Retailers tell me that way too many of the damn things are still on the market. Enough copies of *Deathmate Black* were printed to more than satisfy demand for a long time. However, *Deathmate Black* has been moving up in the price guide lately, as the supply is gradually soaked up. Retailers also say that part of the problem is not a lot of people know *Deathmate Black* is the first appearance of Gen^{13}. To help solve that problem, we've added new cross-references in the price guide (check 'em out!).

Gotta go, fellow Market Watchers. So until next time, keep collecting and loving comics, and keep those letters coming.

—Jon Warren
The Market Watcher

HEY, if you're scratchin' your head wonderin' about somethin' in the comic collecting world, ask the gurus at Market Watchers! Send your letters to:

MARKET WATCHERS
c/o Jon Warren
P.O. Box 2512
Chattanooga, TN
37409
Or send e-mail directly to the head guru himself:
JonRWarren@aol.com

TOP 100

Uncanny X-Men #328

The highest-ordered comic books for the month of NOVEMBER.
Compiled by the *Wizard* Price Guide staff, and working off the data supplied by comic book retailers across the country, the following is a listing of the highest-ordered comics for November. Check out the column on the right for an explanation of this month's rankings.

1. **Uncanny X-Men #328 (Marvel)**
2. X-Men #48 (Marvel)
3. Wolverine #97 (Marvel)
4. X-Man #11 (Marvel)
5. Generation X #11 (Marvel)
6. X-Factor #118 (Marvel)
7. Cable #27 (Marvel)
8. Sabretooth Special #1 (Marvel)
9. Web of Scarlet Spider #3 (Marvel)
10. Spawn #38 (Image)
11. Spawn #39 (Image)
12. X-Force #50 CE (Marvel)
13. Amazing Spider-Man #407 (Marvel)
14. Excalibur #93 (Marvel)
15. Professor Xavier and the X-Men #3 (Marvel)
16. Untold Tales of Spider-Man #5 (Marvel)
17. Spider-Man: The Final Adventure #2 (Marvel)
18. Spider-Man #64 (Marvel)
19. Sensational Spider-Man #0 (Marvel)
20. Amazing Fantasy #17 (Marvel)
21. X-Men Askani'son #1 (Marvel)
22. Incredible Hulk #437 (Marvel)
23. Venom: Along Came a Spider #1 (Marvel)
24. Green Goblin #4 (Marvel)
25. The X-Files #12 (Topps)
26. Superman #108 (DC)
27. Spider-Man 2099 #39 (Marvel)
28. Action Comics #717 (DC)
29. Adventures of Superman #531 (DC)
30. Spectacular Spider-Man #230 (Marvel)
31. Superman: The Man of Steel #52 (DC)
32. Fantastic Four #408 (Marvel)
33. Spider-Man/Spider-Man 2099 (Marvel)
34. New Warriors #67 (Marvel)
35. Starjammers #4 (Marvel)
36. The All New Exiles #2 (Malibu)
37. Spider-Man: The Lost Years #0 (Marvel)
38. Fantastic Four Unplugged #3 (Marvel)
39. X-Men 2099 #28 (Marvel)
40. Avengers #394 (Marvel)
41. Thor #494 (Marvel)
42. 2099 Genesis #1 (Marvel)
43. Batman #526 (DC)
44. Glory #8 (Image)
45. WetWorks #12 (Image)
46. Over the Edge and Under a Buck #3 (Marvel)
47. Detective Comics #693 (DC)
48. Green Lantern/Silver Surfer (DC/Marvel)
49. Green Lantern #70 (DC)
50. Punisher #3 (Marvel)
51. Silver Surfer #112 (Marvel)
52. Azrael #12 (DC)
53. What If? #81 (Marvel)
54. Daredevil #348 (Marvel)
55. Iron Man #324 (Marvel)
56. Star Masters #2 (Marvel)
57. StormWatch #30 (Marvel)
58. Superman/Toyman #1 (DC)
59. Grifter #7 (Image)
60. Youngblood #3 (Image)
61. Captain America #447 (Marvel)
62. Cyberforce #18 (Image)
63. Cybernary #1 (Image)
64. Beavis & Butt-Head #23 (Marvel)
65. The Batman Chronicles #3 (DC)
66. Evil Ernie: Straight to Hell #2 (Chaos!)
67. Ripclaw #2 (Image)
68. Force Works #19 (Marvel)
69. Prophet Babewatch Special #1 (Image)
70. Catwoman #28 (DC)
71. Sovereign Seven #7 (DC)
72. Star Wars: Tales...S. War #4 (D. Horse)
73. War Machine #22 (Marvel)
74. Doc Samson #1 (Marvel)
75. Doom 2099 #37 (Marvel)
76. Fantastic Four 2099 #1 (Marvel)
77. Star Wars: Heir to the Empire #2 (D. Horse)
78. Batman: Shadow of the Bat #46 (DC)
79. Veng. of Vampirella: Mystery Walk #0 (Harris)
80. Backlash #14 (Image)
81. Batman: Legends...Dark Knight #79 (DC)
82. G.O.T.H. #1 (Verotik)
83. Igrat #1 (Verotik)
84. Vengeance of Vampirella #20 (Harris)
85. Vogue #2 (Image)
86. Wonder Woman #105 (DC)
87. Ghost Rider #69 (Marvel)
88. Savage Dragon #24 (Image)
89. Flash #109 (DC)
90. Grifter/Badrock #2 (Image)
91. Ballistic Imagery #1 (Image)
92. Ghost Rider 2099 #21 (Marvel)
93. S. Wars: X-Wing—R. S.: P. Affair #1 (D. Horse)
94. Superboy #23 (DC)
95. Avengelyne: Power #2 (Maximum)
96. Captain Marvel #2 (Marvel)
97. Knightmare #7 (Image)
98. Lunatik #2 (Marvel)
99. Prime #2 (Malibu)
100. Savage Hulk (Marvel)

AT THE TOP:

Marvel was king again this month, taking 22 of the Top 25, and 55 total. The X-books continued solidifying their Top 10 foundation, with *Uncanny X-Men* #328 in the #1 spot and *X-Men* #48 jumping right behind it. The *X-Man* title, starring the young Cable, appears to be getting very hot, going from last month's #8 to #4 this month. Of note, *Spawn* lost some thunder, clocking in at #10 and #11, Or are two books too much?

NEAR THE TOP:

Although all the X-books maintain a supreme sales status, *Excalibur* is the one ongoing title that can't seem to fare as well as its marketmates each month, although it hopped up three spots in November. *Hulk* enjoyed a 15-point leap, Spider-spinoff *Green Goblin* soared up the ladder, and *X-Files* kept its cozy #25 spot. Then there's DC, whose highest representative is the Superman line, followed by a few Bat-books; the company could use another huge seller soon.

NEAR THE MIDDLE:

Now that Reed and Dr. Doom are back, *Fantastic Four* catapulted from #67 to #32 this time around, as its *Unplugged* companion made its mark at #38. *Exiles*—a mutant-filled book—had a very impressive showing for Malibu, one of the company's highest in months. *New Warriors* came out of nowhere and hit #34, thanks to the fact that the Scarlet Spider/new Spidey is now a full-fledged member.

IN THE MIDDLE:

Green Lantern/Silver Surfer scored fairly well, although superhero crossover books just don't have the fandom oomph they used to. (December's *Marvel versus DC* is sure to change that.) After years of low sales numbers, *Punisher* and *Iron Man* are making waves again, due to Marvel's heavy revamp of each character.

IN THE SECOND HALF:

Grifter has been one of Image's hottest characters, and his title's sales climb just won't stop. Captain America has always been a well-loved Marvel figure, and his title is finally starting to show that. One of the first *Hulk* spinoffs in years, *Doc Samson* came in at a respectable #74. *Wonder Woman* took a large dip, dropping a whopping 55 slots.

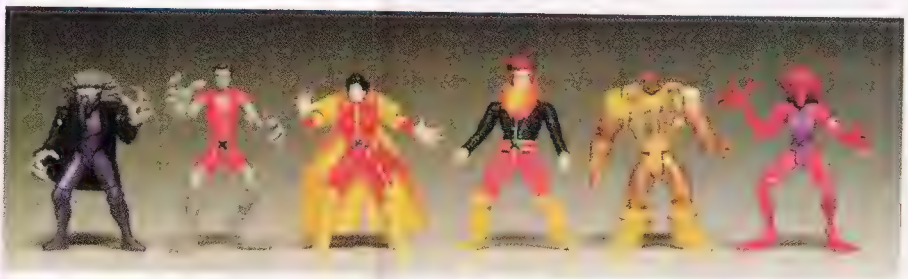
ATTENTION COMIC BOOK RETAILERS:

If you're a retailer who would like to participate in our compiling of the Top 100 (and be a candidate for special prizes), please write to us at the address below.

Top 100 Coordinator
c/o Wizard Press
151 Wells Ave.
Congers, NY 10920-2064
or e-mail us at: WizardTGTC@aol.com

JUNK DRAWER

Little bits of everything that we couldn't stretch into a full-page newsy thing



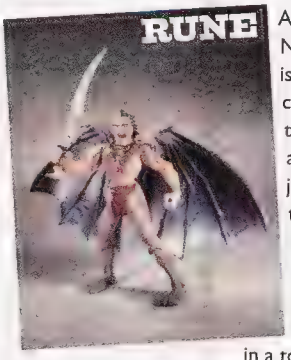
GENETICALLY SPEAKING...

Now you can play with your favorite teenage mutants! Cool! Generation X action figures are finally being released to coincide with Fox's "Generation X" live-action TV-movie in January (see "Trailer Park," page 148). The figures, which were announced at Toy Fair last February, include (from r to l in above photo) Penance, Phalanx, Chamber, Jubilee, Skin and Emplate. Only time will tell if reception is good enough to continue the line. We'll keep you posted. Until then, let's just hope that they'll put out a White Queen figure! Mwrowww!!

Phase 2 for UltraForce

Though Galoob is calling it "Phase 2," its UltraForce toy line will be bolstering its numbers in 1996 with four additional action figures. Slated for a Fall '96 ship, the four figures are Rune, Sludge, Lord Pumpkin and Primevil. If any more pop up in Phase 2, we'll let you know.

In the meantime, "Phase 1," the first UltraForce assortment, begins in mid-December tying into the superteam's animated cartoon. Look for heroes Prime, Hardcase, Prototype, the Night Man, Ghoul and Topaz, with villains Atalon and NM-E. Ghoul is easily the coolest of the bunch, and you'll just have to trust us that his "power" is the funniest thing we've seen in a toy in a long time! Nice job!



Some Marvelous Toy Biz-ness!

Toy Biz President Avi Arad has revealed Toy Biz's future plans. The thrust of the 1996 push will go towards the Ghost Rider and Hercules: The Legendary Journeys lines (based on the syndicated TV show), he said. After that, focus will shift in late '96 to a Silver Surfer line tying into the upcoming Fox animated series and feature film, and a Planet Symbiote subset for the Spider-Man line which will feature Venom, tying into the upcoming "Venom" film. And if that doesn't whet a comics fan's appetite, then how 'bout possible future toy lines for the Avengers, Hulk, Captain America and S.H.I.E.L.D., Daredevil, Cable and Dr. Strange? Though none are guaranteed, it's all in the works, since they're all tied to Marvel's TV, animation and film plans.

"With Silver Surfer, I want to see more space stuff," said Arad. "I want to see things that are unusual. Silver Surfer is very different from anything else we are doing. The show is going to be about 'Mr. Surfer's Neighborhood.' It's not going to be him coming to Earth meeting the Fantastic Four; it's about the world he came from and the other worlds he has been to. I believe in 1997 and '98 we're going to go all out on outer space, because George Lucas will make sure that's the popular genre [with his 'Star Wars' films]."

With the Planet Symbiote line, Arad wouldn't reveal specifics but said, "Stunning stuff. You can hang them up as artforms."

Aside from outer space with '97 and beyond, Arad has plans to expand upon the future world of *X-Force*'s Cable, and is enthusiastic about the Avengers. "The Avengers are getting a kick in the ass in the comics and I want to capitalize on this excitement with a toy line."

Sounds cool to us! And hopefully we'll finally have enough figures to justify saying, "Avengers Assemble!"

misc

Welcome to MISCELLANEOUS STUFF,

***Wizard*'s new classified advertising section. Each month you can turn here to find the stuff you want—comics, cards, toys, collectibles, gainful employment and much more—all in one place.**

And we'd like your input, too. If you have comments about this new section, or if you'd like to see some special sort of product advertised here, let us know. Our goal is to make MISCELLANEOUS STUFF the "yellow pages for cool goodies" (that means no ads for orthopedic shoes or potato combines or other things you don't really care about). So drop us a line (to WIZARD c/o MISCELLANEOUS STUFF or on-line at FULLPAGE1@AOL.COM) and let us know what you think. See ya next month!

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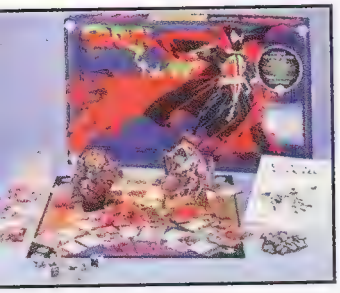
GUESS WHO'S COMING TO DINNER

Now you can add some magnetism to your dinner table (or anywhere else in your house!) with an awesome work of art. Creative License has unveiled its newest cold-cast porcelain sculpture—Magneto—the third figure in the X-Men Sentinel series following Gambit and Wolverine, which will be available in January.

Magneto is designed and sculpted by Scott Leberecht, who has done work for Kenner Products and George Lucas at Industrial Light & Magic. Each fully painted and assembled 12-inch sculpture will be individually numbered with a certificate of authenticity. Suggested retail price is $200.



GET BOARD WITH SPAWN!

Straight from the pages of Image Comics, Pressman Toy Corporation has developed *Spawn: The Game*. The game features four sculpted Spawn figures, along with arch rivals Overtkill and Violator.

Spawn: The Game includes 65 full-color game cards from popular stories in the series. When battling evil drains Spawn of his energy, special cards provide extra strength. (Hey, kinda like vitamins!) To win, be the first to safely play through all four comic books and return to your victory space.

Spawn: The Game, which carries a suggested retail price of $19.99, features the six character figures, a Collector's Edition comic book, gameboard, 90 Spawn Cards, Power Chips, six dice, label sheet, instructions and speed rules for young players. For one to four players, the game is recommended for ages 8 to adult.

FIRE...BAD... ARRRRRRR!!!

Sideshow Inc. introduces Bernie Wrightson's first vinyl model kit—an interactive two-figure scene featuring Dr. Victor Frankenstein and his creation, the Frankenstein monster. Sculpted by Dan Platt, this piece (15" X 15" X 11") comes complete with a 19th century laboratory setting. As a special bonus, each kit will include an exclusive fine art print of the original Wrightson concept drawing that was the basis of the kit. Retail price for the kit is $130. For more information, call the model kit hotline at (800) 474-3746. Tell 'em Igor sent ya!

THAT'S NO MOON!

Well, no, it's not a moon. It's the Millennium Falcon, silly. And even cooler, it's a puzzle! The 857-piece Millennium Falcon Puzz 3-D from Milton-Bradley is a three-dimensional foam-backed replica of the space craft made famous by the "Star Wars" movie trilogy. Available exclusively at Toys R Us—the first 75,000 will be numbered—the completed Millennium Falcon measures 26-inches long by 20-inches wide. The puzzle retails for $29.99. So put the pieces together and get this awesome lookin' ship! (Heck, it may not look fast, but it can certainly outrace Imperial Cruisers!)

DC IS HISTORY

First he brought you the history of Marvel in a neato hardcover coffee table book. Now, Les Daniels does it again with *DC Comics Sixty Years of the World's Favorite Comic Book Heroes*. This 256-page hardcover retails for $40, but it's worth every penny. Besides detailing the entire history of DC comics from its early beginnings, through its media right up to today, there's plenty of awesome artwork, and some really neat behind-the-scenes information. Included is the never-before-seen sketch of Batman holding a living Robin from *Batman* #428 (shown above). In the actual comic, fans had voted to have Robin killed. Not knowing the outcome of the fan voting, DC had prepared both versions of the scene. *DC Comics* is currently available at a bookstore near you.

JUNK DRAWER video games

by Steve Brown

Fourth quarter, 1995, the most anticipated Nov./Dec. of all time for the home video game market. No less than 18 different home gaming systems are vying for your dollars. As an owner of all available systems (thanks to the never-ending generosity of the video game industry), I'd like to offer my advice and perhaps provide you with some personal insight that may help. Without further ado, here is the 1995 system report card ranging from pretenders to contenders.

CDI by Phillips Multimedia...

GRADE: F

Dead on arrival, CDI made two fatal mistakes. First in trying to appeal to the demographics that already had a PC CD-ROM, people who purchase computers to compute, not play games. Secondly—and more fatally—no software that would appeal to the more lucrative market...home video gamers.

NEO GEO by SNK...

GRADE: F

Horribly overpriced software and very few games beyond the stale fighting game genre are what gives the NEO GEO corpse its stink.

Nintendo 8-bit...

GRADE: F

Zero software support, which is surprising, considering the millions of units still in circulation. The folks at Nintendo have severed all wrists of the once sure-handed King of the Hill.

Turbographix CD...

GRADE: F

An underachiever until the end, no one will ever know or care what heights it could have achieved.

M2 3DO upgrade by Panasonic...

GRADE: incomplete

The radical 64-bit add-on will have to wait for next year's report card, since I haven't seen much of it yet.

Ultra 64 by Nintendo...

GRADE: incomplete

The oft delayed, much maligned super system of the future remains in the future.

Jaguar 64 by Atari...

GRADE: D

A very powerful system that only needed a breakthrough title to achieve moderate success. I may be mistaken, but they've only released five games total—that's suicidal marketing.

Sega CD...

GRADE: D

The reliance on FMV (full motion video) games and quick abandonment by Sega for the mucho superior Saturn paints a sad picture for Sega CD enthusiasts.

Sega 32X...

GRADE: D

Repeating all the mistakes of the Sega CD, 32X ranks as the great misfire of 1995. What really irks me is all the cheapjack unneeded "upgrades" of games (*NBA Jam*, *MK2*, etc.) released that added nothing to the original.

Game Boy by Nintendo...

GRADE: C

Hey, the Game Boy may only be 8-bit and black and white, but at least it has a lot of games. Nintendo really does a gangbuster job on promoting and developing what would seem to be a joke of a system. Portable gaming just needs to be diverting fun and Game Boy fits the bill.

Genesis by Sega...

GRADE: C

The drop off in quantity of titles and the feeling of sameness in games released hurt the Genesis. As solid as a system as the SNES, sports games are its strength. The huge base of 16-bit gamers will extend the life of the Genesis through at least '96.

Virtual Boy by Nintendo...

GRADE: C

It's not very virtual and not at all portable, but it is unique and 32-bits of power means lots of potential. Nintendo is in love with this system, so expect a rosy future for Virtual Boy.

Game Gear by Sega...

GRADE: B

Clearly the most underrated system and infinitely superior to the merely okay Game Boy.

Too bad the release of the Nomad system (a portable Sega Genesis fully compatible with Genesis titles) in '96 will make the Game Gear obsolete.

Saturn by Sega...

GRADE: B

Despite all the ill will Sega has generated, the Saturn still comes out a winner. This is the main horse in Sega's stable and will at least show in the high-end systems race.

Super Nintendo...

GRADE: B

The programming and development aspect of Nintendo is still pushing the envelope of 16-bit playability. The SNES is one of the few systems still making a good profit. The designers are pouring their hearts into each game, and it shows. 1995 was the year SNES took over the #1 spot and, as far as 16-bit gaming goes, will remain there forever.

3DO by Panasonic...

GRADE: B

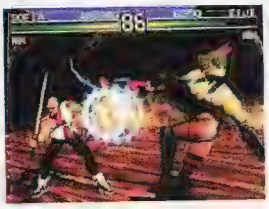
Plenty of great games and power, but the lack of monetary support to develop and program games pales in comparison to Sega and Nintendo.

Sony Playstation...

GRADE: A

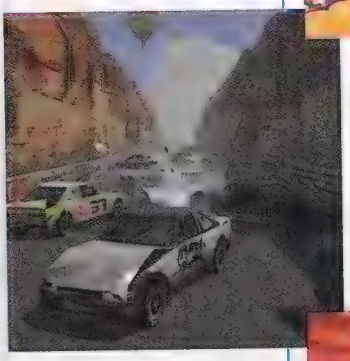
Granted I'm basing that grade on only a handful of games, but judging from the quality of those, it is well justified. Keep in mind that the first generation of games for any system are inherently weak in comparison to games that aren't rushed to meet a systems launch. The speed of the Playstation is incredible and I give it a slight initial edge over the Saturn.

The following is a blow-by-blow review of all the Sony Playstation titles available and a preview of titles in our future.



Battle Arena Toshinden

This is a fully rendered fighting game that simply blows away all that came before it. Its lack of blood will be a detriment to all of you gorehounds. Although it adds nothing to the genre, *Battle Arena* is utopic in playability.



Destruction Derby

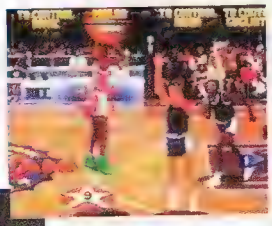
DD utilizes the same engine as *Ridge Racer* but with a neat twist, you can destroy the other race cars. Odds are you will be the one destroyed. This is a tough game. Tons of options and great graphics make this a must-have.

Ridge Racer

Similar to the aforementioned *DD*, *Ridge* has a personality of its own. Slick and quick, a much more solid racing sim than Saturn's *Virtua* and *Daytona*.

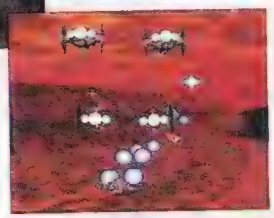
ESPN: Extreme Games

Extreme is basically a *Road Rash* derivative but you're on inline skates, a skateboard or a mountain bike. Navigate your way through a bit-mapped textured locale—Lake Tahoe is my favorite—in a race to finish first.



NBA Jam: Tournament Edition

Exact translation of the arcade version. If you're into the arcade version, you'll love this one.

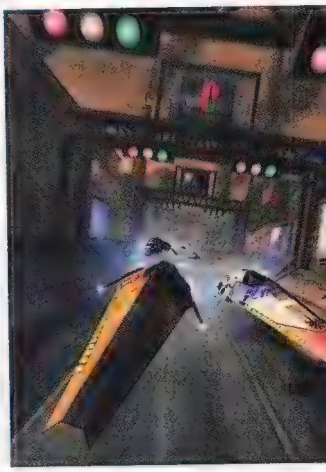


Novastorm

Above average shooter that is the only game to successfully utilize FMV. Very quickly paced, I really lost track of what was going on during heavy firefights.

Street Fighter: The Movie

Avoid this game at all costs; it is a complete disaster. Imagine faded, digitized, video images fighting in a boring *Street Fighter* style, connected by horrible FMV clips of the really pathetic film "Street Fighter: The Movie."



Wipeout

Yet another racing game, this time it's an anti-grav vehicle with a weapons system. I found the controls too fine and ultimately frustrating. The track is very well done and *Wipeout* isn't bad, but too many racing games at launch tarnishes the weakest of the bunch.

The power of the Playstation has attracted a lot of third party support. Electronic Arts has laystation versions of some of most popular titles. *NHL '96*, *GA Tour*, *Madden '96* and *FIFA '96* are just a few of what's coming. Sony also has a six-month exclusive on the 32-bit version of *Mortal Kombat 3*, a huuuuge advantage over the Saturn. Overall, the Sony Playstation is armed to the teeth and is for real; it is now a three-horse race and Sega and Nintendo are gettin' nervous.

bullpen

SPIDER-C.B.I.Q. ANSWERS

from pages 101-103

1. B	6. D	11. C	16. D
2. A	7. B	12. D	17. D
3. D	8. D	13. D	18. C
4. C	9. D	14. B	19. C
5. C	10. A	15. A	20. D

WORD SEARCH ANSWERS

from page 100

N	P	U	M	A	Y	A	M	T	N	U	A	B	L	A	C	K	C	O	H
A	C	A	P	U	N	C	L	E	O	J	D	E	M	A	N	Y	U	G	A
M	G	W	E	N	S	T	A	C	I	E	N	A	J	Y	R	A	M	N	M
R	B	L	A	C	K	C	A	T	L	E	I	L	L	A	B	E	W	E	M
E	R	S	C	A	R	L	E	T	S	P	I	D	E	R	X	E	A	B	E
D	S	H	O	C	K	E	R	U	M	N	R	A	J	E	B	D	T	E	R
I	U	C	I	W	H	W	E	B	E	L	E	C	T	S	D	Z	H	L	H
P	H	I	L	N	S	R	O	I	R	R	A	W	W	E	N	S	A	C	E
S	W	R	I	B	O	K	R	E	T	S	A	M	G	N	I	R	U	N	A
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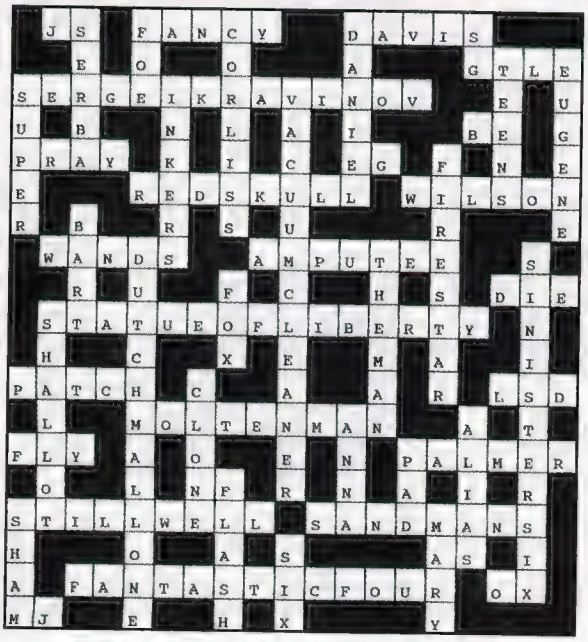
CROSSWORD ANSWERS

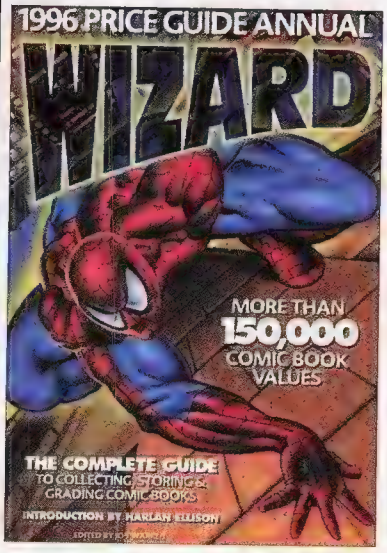
from page 104



CHECK LIST

InQuest #9

Behind this issue's stellar **Kirk/Spock "Star Trek" photo cover**, learn all there is to know about the fate of the **"Star Trek: The Next Generation" Customizable Card Game** and who's gonna be doin' the original "Trek" game! Then check out the **complete Players Guide to the "Star Trek: TNG" game**, listing every card and its ability! Also in this ish: killer card combos and stumper rulings for *Magic: The Gathering*'s *Homelands* expansion set, including the top ten hottest *Homelands* cards! Plus: A complete price guide for *Magic* and all your favorite CCG's, along with Killer Decks, Up Your Sleeve, On Deck and Basic Training, the new column devoted to bringing the novice player up to speed! **$3.99**



1996 Wizard Annual

Whoa, nellie! This **288-page behemoth** is like an issue of *Wizard* on steroids! Jam-packed with **everything you need to know about comics**, this year's edition features the **most frequently asked questions about comics** (and hey, the answers too!), how to buy, sell and store your comics, how to find a comic that suits your reading preferences (no matter how picky they are), **an introduction by acclaimed sci-fi author Harlan Ellison**, the mystic musings of a large, sweaty man in a turban, tons more weird stuff and the **most complete price guide** to ever see the light of day, featuring over **150,000 comic values**. It's groovy, man! **$14.99**

TOP TEN

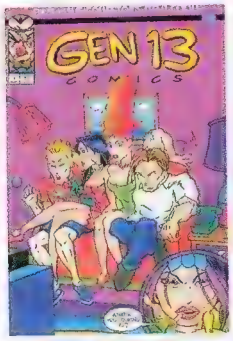
Top ten things we wanna see for X-mas:

10) Two words: More Birthquake!
9) A trend that actually won't scare the few remaining female comic readers away from the industry, like "manly men who look like they have a sock in their tights" (or something).
8) An assurance that Bucky will remain dead.
7) Some more comic writers that have read more than just old comics in their life, so they can draw from different influences and create truly inspired stories. Or if not, more T&A.
6) The Spirit of Vengeance bumping into ol' O.J.
5) Creators that worry about the comic first and the mass-merchandising second.
4) Jimmy Olsen as the meat in a Doomsday/Darkseid sammich.
3) More cameos from Slapstick, that kooky cartoony comic sensation!
2) A one-year moratorium on new characters with names that include blood, death and fire.
1) One more mutant title. Just one.

CONTEST WINNER

GEN[13], *Wizard* #48

This winning "Gen[13] Meets Springfield" cover is Eric Tan of San Diego, Calif., who scores a special "Draw Your Own" *Gen[13]* #1 cover by J. Scott Campbell, personalized just for him! Rad work, Eric!



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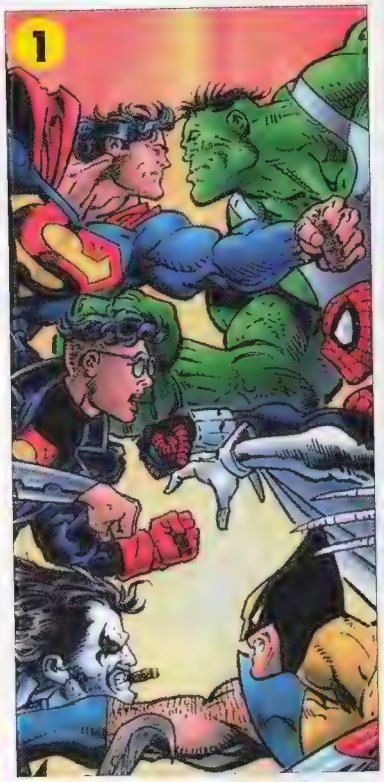
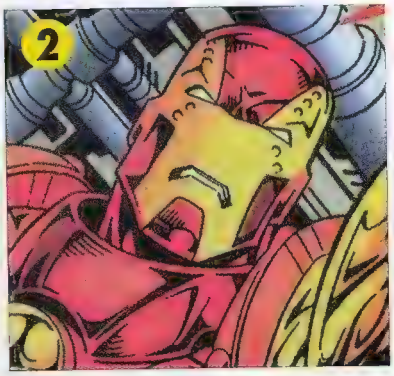
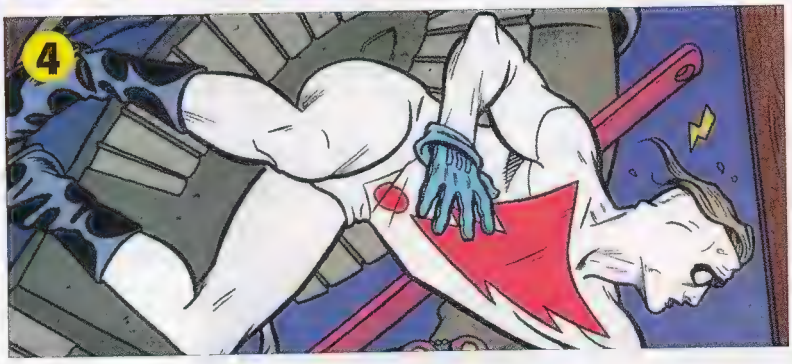






1. Marvel/DC

You've been hearing bits and pieces about it for a couple of months now, and next month we give the full skinny on the most spectacular team-up of all time: the *Marvel versus DC* crossover! Wolverine vs. Lobo! Supes vs. the Hulk! Cap vs. Batman! Bucky's corpse vs. Jason Todd's corpse! It's gonna be great!

2. Iron Man

Think you know all there is to know about Marvel's armored Avenger? Guess again. Major plans are in the works for Iron Man, and we ain't talkin' another armor change or fallin' off the wagon! I.M.'s going through some serious crap that'll change him forever, and we got the inside scoop!

3. Preacher

Wanna see something dark and disturbing that'll make it real hard to go to sleep at night? Good. You're invited to tag along as we crawl inside the minds of Garth Ennis and Steve Dillon, the acclaimed writer/artist team on Vertigo's *Preacher*. Kids: Get your parent's permission first.

4. Funtime with Comic Characters!

Aside from all the neat crap we jam inside *Wizard* every ish, next month we cram the first-ever *Wizard* board game into our polybag! In this dual-sided game (With real pop-out pieces!), you can take on the roles of one of Mike Allred's keen Madman characters or get tanked on gin and spread sunshine and happiness as Milk or Cheese. Board games'll never be the same again!

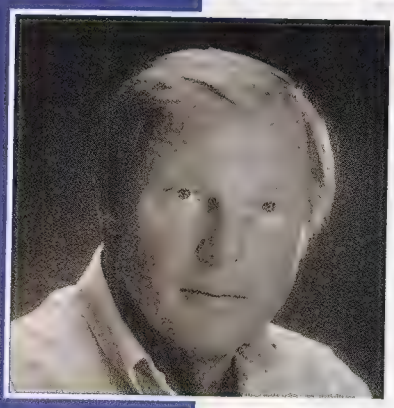
Wizard #54

Triple-gatefold Marvel vs. DC cover by Bart Sears!! On sale in December

by Marc Shapiro

Here's looking at...

ADAM WEST



Adam West knows how well the "Batman" TV series holds up 30 years after the fact. And the answer hangs in the actor's Bat-closet. "It's the suit," laughs the 67-year-old actor. "30 years later and I can still fit into the Batman costume!"

West, who is quick with a pun or a joke not too far removed from his Batman days, does get occasionally serious, especially when it comes to a realistic assessment of how the tongue-in-cheek classic series still holds steam in the '90s. "If you look at the dark, violent direction that Batman has [taken] on the big screen, well, maybe the series doesn't quite hold up. But if you take the show as an individual entity that occupies its own separate world, then our Batman does continue to work, and in a very unique way."

Adam West was born and raised on a wheat farm in Walla Walla, Washington. "I was a lonely and restless kid who was influenced by my pianist-opera singer mother in the direction of acting," relates West. After a four-college odyssey that ultimately landed West a degree in journalism, West relocated to Sacramento, where, in short order, he appeared in a couple of local theater productions that caught the attention of a Hollywood agent and manager who brought him to Tinseltown, where, as a contract player at Warner Bros., he guested in a number of TV shows and appeared in movies such as *The Young Philadelphians*. He was in Italy doing a picture, and then on a brief visit to the States, he was hit with the prospect of filling Batman's boots.

"My agent said this looks like something big, and I told him, 'But I'm trying to have a serious career here.' But I read the first script and I just fell on the floor laughing because it was so funny. It was so funny that I turned down a five-picture deal in Europe to do it."

West's memories of doing "Batman" are awash in a sea of emotions. "There was a sense of tension, excitement and fun from that first day on. I felt I was on the edge of something that could have been the abyss of my career, or that it could all go the other way. For me there was a sense of wonderment and awe in putting on the costume and walking onto the set. It was so important for the show to work that I [had to] walk a tightwire. The kids had to get the action and the adults had to get the gags. It was not easy to be serious in a tongue-in-cheek way while wearing itchy tights," he laughs.

West admits to not doing much laughing when the Bat-bus finally came to a halt after two years and 120 episodes. "A lot of people said I would never work again after 'Batman.' But I licked my wounds for about a year and then said to myself, 'If you want to stay in this business, you'd better get out there and start doing it.' I finally made an agreement between myself and the character of Batman that I would not let having played Batman make me bitter and angry and that I would continue to have a wonderful relationship with it while continuing to work. And, in a sense, I guess I've had the last laugh."

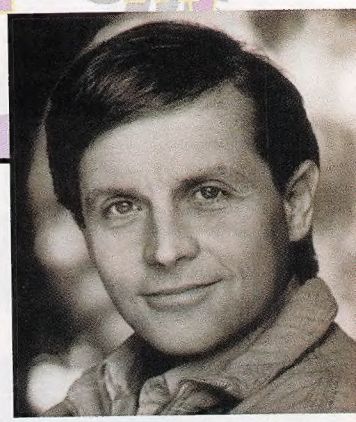
First comic read...

Batman. I found it in a bunkhouse on our ranch.

Favorite comic of all time...

Batman. I guess I feel a certain proprietary interest.

Batman and Robin photo courtesy of Everett Collection



Favorite work of your own...
I guess it's been "Batman" in terms of massive influence.
The one person you'd like to meet...
Thomas Jefferson. I think we'd have a lot in common.
Superpower you would most want...
The ability to make people happy.
Favorite Bat-munchie at 2 a.m....
Steak and eggs
Favorite toy...
As a child, my horse. As an adult, my wife.
Things you collect...
I have a whole warehouse full of Batman memorabilia.
Person who would play you in a movie...
Liam Neeson
Favorite cartoon character...
Daffy Duck
Person you would most like to work with...
Meryl Streep
Favorite musical performer...
Cannonball Adderley
Favorite TV show...
Anything on The Discovery Channel
Last good movie you saw...
Kids
Last good book you read...
The Death of the Messiah, by Raymond E. Brown

BURT WARD

Burt Ward knows enough not to bite the hand that has fed him for the past 30 years. Especially when the hand is attached to a character in cape and tights called Robin. "I would never put down the thing that has made me successful," says the 49-year-old Ward, who recently chronicled the X-rated side of being a star on the "Batman" television series in his book *Boy Wonder: My Life in Tights*. "Playing Robin was everything I could want. It was me being allowed to be myself. I was exactly what the producers imagined Robin would be like."

Ward, born and raised in what he jokingly describes as "the slums of Beverly Hills," was very much into sports and studies and only marginally into comic books when he was young. "I wasn't a comic book fanatic. I was into Superman and Superboy, but I could never seem to find Batman comics and, as far as I was concerned, Batman, for me, did not exist."

Ward already knew acting was in his future when, during his second year of studies at UCLA, he was called out of class "for the very first role I ever auditioned for.

"To be perfectly honest, I didn't even know what I was trying out for," he recalls. "The producers didn't tell me. I remember that I went in for my screen test and two guys pulled off my pants and pulled on these leotards. I was afraid I was auditioning for a porno flick."

Once he discovered that he would be playing Robin to Adam West's Batman, it did not take long for Ward to realize the cutting-edge inside of the show's camp exterior. "Our attitude was when we put on the costumes we would put on the world. We were the only superheroes who wore our underwear on the outside. Adam and I were playing it straight, but it was really quite funny. We were taunting our viewers to see if they could figure out what was really going on. We were injecting all kinds of sexual innuendo and other things into that show. We could be as wild and crazy as we wanted, as long as we said our dialogue and hit our marks."

The wild and crazy times hit the skids for Ward following the demise of the show. The actor has occasionally appeared in low-budget, direct-to-video films like *Killcrazy*, *Robot Ninja* and *Virgin High*, but he admits that Robin, to a large extent, killed his acting career. "I tried to get other work after 'Batman,' but I was hopelessly stereotyped. Maybe I was overly optimistic, but I was never really bothered by it. I've had a great time as Robin, but my life never depended on acting again. I knew I would find something else to do."

Ward, whose busy schedule includes publishing ventures and comic convention appearances, looks nostalgically back to a time when his future as a crimefighting superhero seemed preordained. "When I was three years old, I used to ride around the neighborhood on my tricycle with a blue towel clothespinned around my neck. I was playing at being Superboy, but who knows. Maybe Robin was already lurking in the background."

First comic read...
Superman
Favorite comic of all time...
Superboy
Favorite work of your own...
It has to be Robin. I was thrilled by the opportunity.
The one person you'd like to meet...
Albert Einstein. I appreciate people who are brilliant.
Superpower you would most want...
What I would consider a superpower is the ability to live forever.
Favorite Bat-munchie at 2 a.m....
Pretzels
Favorite toy...
As a child, a ball, any kind of ball. As an adult, I would say it's my horses.
Things you collect...
Computer programs
Person who would play you in a movie...
I would say Tom Cruise if he were about 10 years younger.
Favorite cartoon show...
"Howdy Doody" is the only thing I remember watching.
Person you would most like to work with...
Sean Connery
Favorite musical performer...
Elvis Presley
Favorite TV show...
Anything on CNN
Last good movie you saw...
Babe
Last good book you read...
The Final Jihad, by Martin Keating

HALLOWEEN HAVOC

GOODBYE. ME AM PATZARRO, CHIEF-IN-EDITOR OF BOOK. ME WANT SAY "NO THANK YOU" FOR MAKE WIZARD SO POPULAR THIS YEAR.

HOPE YOU NO LIKE PICS FROM THIS YEAR'S HALLOWEEN PARTY. CHECK MASTHEAD FOR WHO AM WHO. UNHAPPY HOLIDAYS!

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NO SYMPATHY FOR THE SYMBIOTE!
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